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ANNEX

THE FLAMES OF MOSCOW

BY

IVAN LUKASH

Translated from the Russian by
NATALIE DUDDINGTON

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THE FLAMES OF MOSCOW

THE PROLOGUE

I

THE Imperial black eagle of Russia, encircled in yellow, stood out against the ermine of the canopy. The bronze griffons by the throne seemed to stir in the misty light of many candles. The sumptuous canopy fell in dark folds.

Tall and resplendent, the Emperor and Great Protector of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, dressed in a cope of red velvet and a black Maltese cloak, slowly descended from the throne. His shadow moved aslant the black eagle. The crowd of armour-bearers, commanders, and Maltese knights in red coats bowed noiselessly. Wax dropped on to the shoe buckles and the flame of the candles flickered.

A footman dressed in pale gold pushed open the bedroom door. The Emperor passed a dark-skinned hand across his face and moved his wrinkled mouth; he was thirsty.

Count Kutaisov, whose black eyes looked cool and velvety under a snow-white wig, was disrobing the

Emperor. Lightly touching his neck and the back of his head, he slightly disarranged the black lace on the collar of the cloak.

The Emperor took off the chain of the Order and a strip of Maltese embroidery picturing in black silk the Passion of Our Lord. With both hands he lifted from his head a diamond crown, and the count handed him a shabby case to put it in; the velvet bottom smelt of stale scent.

When the count had taken off the Emperor's Maltese cloak, a small thin man, in a green uniform with red revers and white stockings that wrinkled on his thin legs, appeared as though by magic in place of the Great Protector towering in the brilliance of the diamonds.

"Thank you, count," said a husky voice. "You may go. Good-night."

With a silk handkerchief Paul wiped his moist snub nose, the plait twisted into a bun, and the flattened locks at the temples.

His yellowish face was bent over the candle. The griffons on the candlesticks were twisted together, biting each other's tails, and the shadow of the Emperor's head and the corner of the arm-chair looked like a black monster against the wallpaper. A white spaniel stirred on its velvet mattress by the screen. It stretched its slender paws and shook itself.

The spaniel licked the brass buckle on the Tsar's

shoe, sniffed the white stockings, and putting its paws on the arm-chair, licked Paul's palm with its hot tongue.

Paul took hold of the dog's paws with one hand and moved them off the chair.

On sleepless nights he used to play with the white spaniel: he made it catch biscuits and jump over his sword. Barking loudly, with its ears thrown back, the spaniel rushed about the bedroom, rummaging among the cushions. Paul threw his hat at it. Then the dog crawled to him and turned over on its back.

"Be quiet, don't bark," said the Tsar, caressing the dog's fluffy ear. "It's forbidden to bark in the Palace at night."

Paul suffered from insomnia, but each night he felt confident that he would sleep. Breathing heavily, he put on his linen coat and a night-cap, and lay down with a sigh on his camp-bed behind the screen.

A black sword, a scarf, and a black cane hung above his head; on the wall opposite, an angel by Guido Reni smiled the cool smile of sleep.

He shut his eyes tightly, drew a deep breath, and relaxed his whole body—only his arms were folded on his breast as usual. And all at once some strange power made him open his eyes.

There was the bedroom before him, the black

sword, the black cane, the blind angel—a huge staring bedroom, the floating wick of a flickering candle throwing dim reflections on the wallpaper.

"Open the door, please! There's a fire in the Palace. The diamonds have been stolen. . . ."

His sword put on crookedly, his stockings coming down, his curls dishevelled and clotted with grey powder, Paul knocked at the Empress's door after midnight. He was furious at not being able to sleep, furious at the Empress's face looking white and dumb like an image in the mirror.

"Why have you kept me waiting? I can't get to sleep."

He ran about the dark drawing-room, stamping his heels. The heavy German women and the Empress's *lectrice,* Miss Kennedy—a bony spinster with a face like a horse—curtseyed to him, rustling their farthingales, and surreptitiously straightened the hastily fastened hooks on the back of their dresses. The attendants brought candles. A midnight concert began.

The Tsar's shoe-buckles rattled, and the heavy locks of his wig moved from side to side as he beat time, reciting to them in a muffled voice verses of Voltaire or Racine. He coughed, breathing heavily, and glanced round him, ready to beat with his cane the curtseying, rustling old German women.

He played on the flute Vangali's serenades and

Pleyel's symphonies, every note out of tune, and suddenly blew out the candles at the music desk.

"You are asleep—I see you are asleep. . . . Goodbye."

Tightening his sword belt he ran into the corridor. He walked in the dark, breathless with anger. The white spaniel followed on his heels.

He wished he could leave the palace quietly, unseen by everyone; go away unknown to all, like Harun-al-Rashid, vanishing utterly.

The Horse Guards on duty jumped off the chest behind the column, rattling their muskets, and the officer, half-awake, shouted loudly:

"Guards, turn out!"

Tapping the floor with his stick, the Emperor walked past them with a firm, quick step.

Under the Cariatides there were some grenadier sentries. As though inspecting the line —the angle between the arm and shoulder—the Emperor walked close up to the men. He saw red cuffs, brass buttons on the sleeves, swords held firmly in sinewy fists, brass helmets tightly strapped under the chin, with a white Maltese cross upon them. The soldiers' faces were dim patches of white in the darkness.

Paul liked the strong, peaceful smell of the cloth and of the broad, tarred shoes; he liked the clean-shaven Mongolian faces with black bristles on the

cheeks and by the mouth—Russian soldiers' faces in the crown of powdered curls. He always wanted to come up quite close to them, to touch the swords, to stroke the uniform sleeves, to ask some question, to find out something.

The men in his Life Guards had plain names like Nefyod, Mitri, Ivan, Anikita, Illarion, Mihailo. There was one with the strange name of Afrikan. The grenadier Afrikan was on guard under the statue of Cleopatra; the medals of St. John of Jerusalem and the soldiers' brass cross glittered on the old man's chest, and his sharp chin was covered with dry bristles that looked like prickly snow.

Corporal Afrikan Zimin was on duty at the Castle, under the banners, from midnight till four o'clock. He saluted the Emperor slowly, deliberately, with a distinct clank of his sword.

Paul admired the old "Alpine eagle" and wanted to ask him something too, to learn something from him; but, taking off his three-cornered hat, he merely passed his palm over his powdered hair and said with a guilty smile:

"Here I am, wandering about the Palace like a ghost, brother. . . . I can't sleep." He wrinkled his face and tossed his head, and smokelike powder fell on the red lapel of his Preobrazhensky uniform.

"My head aches, brother. The doctors keep on about the powders, but they don't do me any good."

One night the copper medals of St. John of Jerusalem stirred on Afrikan's breast as he drew a long breath and let some words escape him:

"Apple kvass. . . . It's the very thing for Your Majesty; it cools the head and makes one sleep."

"Ah, that's true, brother; it's a fine kvass, but I haven't any in the Castle."

"Tell them to bring you some from the Arcade. There is sure to be some there; apple kvass is very good for one."

This was the beginning of the Emperor's midnight talks with the grenadier. Sometimes Paul treated the soldier to a pinch of snuff from his snuff-box. The old man shifted his sword and, putting the snuff on his nail, sniffed it up.

Their nightly talks were of commissariat trains, of fuel, of quilted winter coats, of the French Jacobins, of banners, of campaign, and of how they moisten flax in the province of Pskov. The white spaniel sniffed the grenadier's broad shoes, leaned its paws against his bony knee, and licked the old man's rough hand.

"You made a mess of that campaign," Paul said with vexation, speaking of the Dutch expedition, and closed his snuff-box.

Afrikan took a sniff, wrinkling his nose, and sneezed politely.

"Maybe someone did make a mess of it, but it

wasn't us," the old man replied. "We had a terrible time there. The Dutch air didn't suit us, we lost our teeth from scurvy, and there were no battles. We were simply buried in mud in that Holland. It wasn't a campaign but a regular prison. . . . It's the truth."

"Prison. . . . Why, have you been in a prison?"

"We mount guard for Your Majesty in prisons too."

"I see you are the right sort of man, Afrikan."

"At your service, Your Majesty. . . . I remember your father, too."

"My father . . ." Paul's hand trembled as he took hold of the soldier's button, stamped with the Imperial eagle.

"Why, of course I do, Your Majesty. We were stationed by Peterhof. I was a drummer then, a mere boy, and your father, too, was quite young. He had such long legs, and wore riding-boots, and kept smoking a pipe. I remember he greeted one very briskly, and his pipe was a clay."

Paul let go the soldier's button and bowed his head, clasping his hands behind his back.

He was seven when his father, the Tsar of all the Russias, disappeared like a Harun-al-Rashid. The monks opened his father's coffin at the Alexandro-Nevsky Monastery, but there was nothing but cobwebs and dark dust in the coffin, and in the dust a

rusty-looking riding-boot, pieces of a blue uniform, and locks of reddish hair. The Majesty of All Russias had disappeared.

The old grenadier was breathing lightly above the Emperor's head. Paul raised his snub-nosed face to him.

"And if someone thinks of murdering me, will you defend me, grenadier?"

"God preserve you. Why, Father Tsar, we'd smash anyone to save you—we'd make mincemeat of all foreign armies. . . ."

"Come, come, old man, we won't talk of it."

. . . . . .

In the middle of February the guards at the Winter Palace were changed, and Corporal Afrikan Zimin was transferred to Tsarevitch Alexander's apartments. Every night, from midnight till four o'clock, the old man waited for the Emperor's firm step and the sound of his cane tapping on the parquet floor. But Paul did not go near Alexander's rooms.

The grenadier waited for the Emperor for two sleepless weeks, and in the third he returned one night from duty at the Palace and lay down on his bed fully dressed.

Shaking all over, and clanking his sabre, he sat up on the bed and recited aloud the Psalm for the de-

parted. Before it was light, the sleepy doctor, a young German from Dorpat, crossed the barrack square in his dressing-gown. The grenadiers crowded round the walls listening to the old corporal struggling and calling out the sacred words.

"This isn't a church but a barracks," the German said gloomily. "Take the man away, he has gone out of his mind."

Bare-footed grenadiers softly approached Afrikan. They took off his green uniform, his copper medals, and the knapsack decorated with flaming grenades, and wrapped up his thin body in a loose gown. The doctor touched the old man on the shoulder.

"Come along, uncle."

Dressed in hempen drawers and looking like an emaciated corpse, the corporal jumped off his bed and cried out, beating himself on the breast with feverish hands:

"Brothers, dear ones, save him! Save the Tsar Paul Petrovitch, brothers! Murderers . . ."

He seized his musket.

"Back, dogs! I'll give you the bayonet." And he swore horribly. The bare-footed grenadiers rushed at him from behind like cats and overpowered him. The old corporal was bound.

At dawn Corporal Afrikan was taken under guard to the soldiers' madhouse. Wearing only his

drawers and a loose gown over his bony shoulders, the Alpine eagle stepped over the frozen puddles. His powdered wig seemed to be smoking, and he muttered incoherently the solemn words of the Psalms. . . .

The grenadier's sudden madness was not mentioned to His Majesty in the daily report—the event not being of sufficient importance.

. . . . . .

Paul marked his sleepless nights with a nailmark on the calendar. In the morning he galloped on his heavy mare, Pompona, round the mist-covered Summer Garden, and then went to his bedroom and lay on the bed behind the screen, as he was, in his hat and riding-boots. He lay in his buckskins, with his arms crossed on his chest, breathing loudly and rapidly. He had had no sleep since the night when the Grand Duchess had given birth to a still-born daughter. He had been expecting a grandson. He had not the strength to wait any longer. Pahlen had told him the other day that Constantine and Alexander were in the conspiracy—the fair-haired, sly Alexander, with his noiseless movements and thin, malicious lips like his grandmother's—Alexander looked like that still-born baby daughter of his. Pahlen had told him that Alexander had been secretly talking to Panin about shutting Paul up in

a fortress. Unknown to all, a messenger had already been dispatched to Arakcheyev. He would cross-examine them all himself, and the Grand Dukes too. All classes and ranks of the Empire, the gentry, the peasants, the clergy, the merchants, the soldiers, the old grenadier Afrikan, the generals, the metropolitans and archbishops, the Senate and the Synod, would try in open court the criminals who had schemed to assassinate the Tsar. The fair-haired Alexander would be beaten with sticks in the Square to the sound of the drums—while all the people looked on.

The dull winter day was over, the dark night had come. The bedroom seemed to be staring at him with thousands of eyes. Pahlen had talked of his sons, Alexander and Constantine, his flesh and blood. The Empress would be made a nun and locked up in a fortress.

In his buckskins and three-cornered hat, with a cane in his hand, and two scintillating stars on the wide lapel of his uniform—just as he was when riding in the Summer Garden—the Emperor Paul walked down a corridor in the Castle.

The grenadier Afrikan's post was under the statue of Cleopatra. He must tell him everything.

A giant in a brass helmet with a green plume saluted with his sword, staring hard at the Emperor. Paul drew back with a shudder. It was

not the man he sought. The guards had been changed.

The grenadier, Rodion Koshevok, a middle-aged Little Russian with hazel eyes, was stationed under a dark wall-painting of a stag-hunt. He always seemed strangely surprised, and looked at Paul without any fear. In their night conversations the man, stammering slightly, interpreted the Bible to the Emperor. Not listening, Paul looked with a sad, kind smile at the soldier-philosopher's bald forehead with three wrinkles upon it. The older soldiers liked talking of sacred subjects; as many votive candles burnt in the Imperial barracks as in a solemn temple; a deserter had proclaimed himself among the Scoptsi to be God the Father, and there were both Old Believers and "White Doves" in the Christian Russian army.

"My head aches, brother—my head," said Paul hoarsely, coming up to the grenadier.

He wiped his forehead with his leather glove. He must give word to arrest the conspirators, the commanders, Pahlen, his sons. He thought: "You must go slow, Paul; you are going mad."

"My head aches," he repeated sharply. "Does your Bible give a remedy for headache?"

"It doesn't c-clearly, Your M-Majesty. . . . It d-depends how you t-take it; the Prophet Jeremiah, sixth verse . . ."

"Jeremiah? I don't understand. I don't understand anything to-day. Wait, where is old Afrikan?"

"In the m-madhouse, Your M-Majesty. He was taken there on Thursday."

"In the madhouse!—so he must have gone out of his mind," thought Paul. "Everyone is mad. I am mad, too."

The cane tapped against the parquet. A snowdrift seemed to follow the Emperor—his white dog.

At daybreak the grenadiers returned to the barracks from sentry duty at the Palace and met together, scratching their chests under their hempen shirts and twisting their powdered plaits round their heads. Fearfully they gazed into each other's eyes. Corporal Afrikan had gone out of his mind; Father Tsar walked about the Palace tapping his cane; he asked about Russia, about the soldiers, and looked sad at what they said; he complained of his head as he raised his hand to straighten his locks. The corporal had gone mad, and the Emperor Paul walked about sleepless, night after night, followed by his white spaniel.

. . . . . .

Throughout the damp Castle, in all the corridors, muskets were rattling, swords clanking, and sentries calling as in a prison.

The House Guards were on duty by the Tsar's bedroom. Suddenly Paul ordered the officer in command, Colonel Sablukov, to take the Horse Guards away. The Tsar knew that their commander and the commanders of the Cavalier Guards, of the Semyonovsky, Izmailovsky, Preobrazhensky, and Keksholm Regiments were involved in the criminal conspiracy; he knew the names of the would-be assassins; Pahlen had told him everything. Paul tapped his cane against the floor and shouted, "Jacobin!" at Sablukov. The Emperor's face was clouded, and his lips twitched with anger. Sablukov's swarthy face flushed crimson, and he answered something in French. Shouldering their muskets, the soldiers looked wildly at the Emperor.

"I know better," Paul cried breathlessly. "Take the Guards away!"

The white spaniel rushed to Sablukov and pressed itself against his riding-boot. Sablukov brushed the dog away with his cap, but it pressed itself against him once more. The Emperor hit the spaniel with his hat and drove it away.

"Right turn, quick march!" Paul commanded hoarsely. "To-night, in marching order and with ammunition, clear out of the capital. Two staff majors will accompany the regiment for five miles. . . ."

The spaniel howled and rubbed itself against Paul's

legs while the Guards filed away. Paul was left alone in the library. The dog howled.

"Be off!" He hit it with his hat.

Yelping pitifully, the spaniel dashed under the jasper table. Paul wiped his forehead with a silk handkerchief. The whites of his eyes gleamed in the darkness.

All round him were heavy mahogany doors decorated with bronze; Medusas' heads with coils of snakes looked at him with their dead eyes. A rococo candelabra stood on a malachite pillar; flames, like a fiery mane, were reflected in the misty mirror. A cold draught breathed through the dark room.

Paul had a sudden vision as he looked at the smoky candle-light. The dead Medusa in coils of snakes, the decrepit Medusa with dull eyes and no lashes, was his mother, his kind mother. She was the criminal; she was the sin of Russia; she alone was to blame for his sons wanting to murder him.

The ugliest and the most ridiculous of Catherine's courtiers was he, the luckless Paul, a small, misshapen, snub-nosed man with a big head, the gloomy buffoon of the Palace evenings, a Minotaur in the abode of Astrea.

His mother always spoke to him maliciously, sweetly, and pompously. She was irritated at the very sight of him; she felt his dumb, passionate hatred. Her heavy, imposing, powder-covered face

went red in patches, and something seemed to click in her mouth like an iron spring when she was speaking to him.

And he, the middle-aged Tsarevitch, the ghost of the murdered Prince of Golstein, aping Frederic in his Prussian uniform—he hated her bloodless, vicious hands with their fine shiny skin, her yellowish face that seemed made of smooth wax, the dimple on her chin, and the gap in her front teeth; he hated the sound of her footsteps and the way she chewed her food.

A sick feeling came over him in her study, whither he had been called in the morning to receive a gracious reprimand. With an amiable smile she reproached him in elegant French for wasting money on his caprices in Gatchina and ruining the Exchequer. She was meanwhile occupied with her morning toilet—powdering herself out of a silver basin, held between her knees. He always kept silent in his mother's study. The French words came quicker and more amiably. Her white *gros-de-Tours* dressing-gown slightly opened over her plump, round knee—she was no longer paying attention to proprieties. The cold eyes without eyelashes, Medusa's eyes, looked at him out of the mirror—the iron spring clicked in her mouth, the silver powder-basin rang; she cried something in German, striking her palm against the marble, and the gay

gilded fawns that supported the semicircular dressing-table quivered. If it had not been for his mother, how radiant his life would have been, how grand and beautiful his reign! The dead old woman had put it into his sons' heads that they should assassinate their father. She alone was to blame for Russia's trouble.

But underneath all that hatred and bitterness shy love for his mother lay hidden. When he was a child his mother had seemed to him a beautiful goddess shedding a radiance about her. He remembered how proudly he raised his head at the thought that he was the son of the dazzling, brilliant Catherine. One day—he was about nine then—he went up to a tall mirror in the Palace, certain that, being the son of a goddess, he would be reflected in the mirror as beautifully as she was—and saw a puny, snub-nosed boy with a sallow face, a misshapen little creature on thin legs. He was ashamed of being so ugly, and he thought that he could not be her son, that he had no right to love her or even to think of her loving him. And yet, in the night, when he knew from his tutor's breathing that the man was asleep, he stroked the pillow, thinking of his mother. Till adolescence he dreamed that his mother would come to him at night, when no one heard them, and he would tell her his thoughts and his love. But his mother never came.

He remembered, too, a June night in the Summer Palace, when the parquet floors were covered with dirty footprints, and a crowd of drunken guardsmen wandered about the rooms. He sat hidden by a heap of damp cloaks on an arm-chair by a Chinese screen. Feminine laughter could be heard behind the screen, the light of a candle penetrated through the dark silk. Princess Dashkov, small, thick-set, and dark, and his beautiful mother were behind the screen. His mother in those days was nimble as a boy and knew how to whistle.

"Look, horsehair has stuck to my uniform," he heard her laughing voice behind the screen. "I am wet through with sweat after our Peterhof march." The little princess answered something. He did not like Princess Dashkov and was afraid of her; she was like a little mouse running to and fro. His mother flung the Guards uniform on the screen and hastily pulled on a rustling dress.

Another night he was waiting for her by the Chinese screen, on a heap of guardsmen's cloaks.

Her small, full figure, dressed in black with a red ribbon across her shoulder, glided noiselessly past him. He rushed to her, rubbing his powdered head against her warm hands.

"You are unwell, my dear," she said coldly. "Where is your tutor? You have no business to be here."

"Lady-mother, lady-mother," he muttered, hiding his face in her dress. "Lady-mother, why do they say that papa is no more—that he is dead?"

She gently pushed him away, took a handkerchief from the bosom of her dress, and pressed it to her eyes. "My dear son, you have been told the truth. Your papa died of a sudden attack of colic."

She took away the handkerchief, and he saw the cold, sparkling eyes of a Medusa, transparent as ice.

"No, no!" he shouted, stamping with his red heels. "No, it isn't true; no, papa is living; it's a lie!"

His mother seized him by the hands; he bit her. He was dragged away from her, his face was pressed to somebody's wig, he felt coarse hair in his mouth, he was being choked. . . .

Paul wiped his snub-nosed face with his sleeve. The flames quivered in the mirror like a fiery mane. It was Grigory Orlov who had strangled his father. The white spaniel crawled up and rubbed itself against Paul's shoe. He drew a hoarse breath and bent down to the dog.

"There, don't howl, I am wretched enough as it is."

And he squeezed its pointed muzzle.

. . . . . .

The spaniel was no longer admitted to the dining-room.

In the darkness under the table Tsarevitch Alexander had teased the dog with the toe of his narrow shoe. The toe searched for the dog but never ventured to touch the animal. One day the spaniel growled under the table, rushed at the shoe, and bit through Alexander's cream-coloured stocking. The Emperor beat the dog with his cane. It barked desperately at the Emperor, at the Empress, at the aide-de-camp Uvarov, and was thrown out of the room.

Grenadiers Akim Govoruhin and Mihailo Perekrestov stood outside the dining-room door. The spaniel sat beside them, waiting patiently, yawning and sneezing now and again. Then it angrily wrinkled its nose, turned round and round, and catching its tail, bit at it with an angry growl.

The grenadiers winked to each other and rattled their muskets. The dog jumped up and listened alertly. The grenadiers pretended not to see it. Ingratiatingly wagging its tail, the dog approached them cautiously. They rattled their muskets again, and it ran back to the doors with a yelp.

The Emperor came out of the dining-room, the grenadiers saluted with their swords, and the spaniel jumped in the air, trying to lick Paul on the chin.

Paul was put into a good humour at supper by Alexander sneezing suddenly, and by the lively tussle of the pages over some crystallised fruit; he threw handfuls of the heavy sweets to them from the table,

and the boys, who had grown chilly in the cold room, readily began a merry fight. Paul's moist brown eyes were kind and friendly. He bent down to the spaniel and caressed its pointed ears:

"So you've been impatient, have you?"

The dog rushed to his feet and then dashed forward. Paul put out his black cane for it to jump over. Playing with the spaniel in this way, the Emperor reached his bedroom.

He had a feeling of relief and weariness, of restful coolness. He must have been tired out by his sharp conversation with Colonel Sablukov and the overpowering fit of rage he had had in the dark library by the flickering candelabra; now he was completely at rest. The hot ringing in his ears had stopped, and the nervous tension that had kept him from sleeping for a week relaxed. There was a stillness in him, like the breath of freshly-fallen snow. He would be sure to sleep that night. Sleep would be welcome.

In the bedroom he pressed his face to the cold window-panes. His cheeks were burning with weariness. There was a thick snowstorm outside; but it was March, and the warm wind and April weather would be coming soon. Pressed to the glass, his nose looked like a negro's. Paul smiled at his own reflection, and thought, "There's a snub-nosed nigger." The spaniel jumped on to a chair

and also looked out of the window, placing its paws on the glass.

Paul recalled how the white Pahlen—he always wore a white uniform—crouched in front of the spaniel the last time he came with his report.

"Come on, jump!"

The spaniel had hidden under a chair and growled.

"It doesn't know its friends, Your Majesty. Come to me, you silly flea."

"Leave it alone, it will bite you."

"It won't bite me; it's afraid of me."

"That will do; come to business!"

Pahlen, Pahlen. . . . He kept asking Paul to wait, to give the conspirators no ground for suspicion; he dodged about, flitting to and fro like that murky snowstorm outside. Why was Arakcheyev late? Arakcheyev must gallop round Petersburg before the drum, before the morning cannon. He must seize them all in the night, secretly, put them in chains, and hide them in prisons before dawn, so that in the morning no one should know anything; they would have disappeared unknown to all, and for ever. Arakcheyev would draw up the list of the malefactors' names, including Alexander and Constantine. The white Pahlen must be examined too, under torture. . . . They must go to their death, all of them.

They would disappear and he would forget them.

He would forget it all. Warm weather would be coming soon, warships were already rigged out at Cronstadt.

When the service of blessing was held on the warship *Panteleimon the Healer*, the deaf Prince Gagarin said that the late Suvorov, the cunning generalissimo, the Russian Master-Fox, had spoken of Catherine II as "The Midday Devil."

Yes, that is what she was. Russia's evil fate came from her. Paul smiled at his own reflection in the dark window. Was it for him to alter Russia's destiny? For a moment he thought of himself as of a stranger; looking at his own head in the window, he thought that the mystery of Russia's whole past and future was centred round that dark head, while he knew nothing of that mystery, and was powerless to alter anything.

Muttering to himself, "The Midday Devil," he walked to the screen. His shadow fell upon the cupboard in which they put away flags, the colours of the Guards regiments, and swords of officers who were under arrest.

The spaniel listened to his coughing behind the screen, moving intelligently its moist, sensitive nose.

Looking older, in a brocade night-cap, a white linen jacket, and soft slippers, Paul came out from behind the screen and walked to the table. The spaniel followed at his heels, sniffing the slippers.

It was many a day since he had looked at a book. He picked up one at random and raised it to the light: *The Speculative Mirror,* printed by N. Novikov's University Press—a book dating back to the times of Lopuhin.

When the old man from Moscow, Novikov, liberated from Schlüsselburg, came before the Emperor, he fell on his knees before Paul. The Tsar raised him and kissed him on his scrubby chin. During their conversation they both wept over the unhappy death of the martyred Tsar John VI [1] in the Schlüsselburg fortress. The Moscow Rosicrucians revered John, and considered him the true Tsar of Russia and Great Master of the Empire of the Rose and Cross.

To the honour and glory of the mysterious name of John, the servant of God, Paul, the great Master of a mighty Order, was now protecting the Russian Empire by the knightly shield of Saint John of Jerusalem.

The Mystery of Russia, of the Empire of the Rose and Cross, was made clear to him by the Martinist papers contained in the two boxes that had been sent to his mother in Petersburg after the arrest in Moscow of the old man in the hare-skin coat—Novikov.

[1] Ivan Antonovitch, grand-nephew of Peter the Great, proclaimed Tsar at the age of six months, deposed soon after by Elizabeth, and kept prisoner for the rest of his short life.

Paul saw with his mind's eye the Empire of the Golden Rose and Cross, and with a stern hand he drove towards it the dark flocks of the races subject to him, that light might dawn upon them at last.

Who was to help him in this endeavour? Not the pleasure-loving, powdered courtiers, who knew nothing but the lust of wantonness. They were the embodiment of darkness, the means of the ruin and fall of Russia's fair temple. He curbed them with a curb of iron, he drove them into barracks, he clothed them in the stiff Prussian uniforms. His Empire would be the Empire of Law and not of Rebellion, not of self-made rulers and midnight murderers. He would impose upon Russia and himself the sacred law, the mystical shield of John; he would make the whole of his country, from Emperor down to the last soldier, enter the holy order of Knighthood. Might his dream come true!

The standard of the Order of Jerusalem had already been hoisted over the Palace tower; Quarengius had built the chapel and inscribed in bronze letters over the door:

D.O.M.
Divo Joanni Babtistul sacrum
Paulo I.
Omnium Russiarum Imperatore ac ordinis
St. Joannis Hierosolimitani
Magno Magistro.

On St. John's Day he made manifest to all the meaning of the Order's mysteries. On that night of June the Order's Chief Master of Ceremonies, Count Yuri Golovkin, the knights of the Maltese Cross in their ceremonial cloaks, and he, Paul of Russia, Grand Master of the Order, carrying lighted tapers, walked in a big procession round this first temple of his holy Empire.

"Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever."

Paul muttered cheerfully in a hoarse voice the words of the Psalm inscribed on the porphyry front of his Castle. He crossed himself. People did not as yet understand his aim, but in the fulness of days the holy mystery would be revealed to all, and Russia would become the Home of God's Law, the Home of Holiness, a noble order of Knighthood—or cease to exist at all.

He, the luckless Paul, the rejected son, the prisoner of Gatchina, had long perceived in the very sun of Catherine's glory the coiled snake of the abyss, the sin of lust and wantonness. That glory and that Empire had been conceived in filth, bloodshed, and crime. But the shield of his new Empire was John, the sinless knight. Paul knew that people considered him a demented tyrant. But was it tyranny to crush the serpent's head in his own family, in his own sons, if need be?

He was ordained to destroy, with God's help, the serpent in his country for ever. It was not for nothing that Pugatchov had risen in revolt in his name and his father's, that Paul had received in Gatchina the French general, Dumouriez, a creature of the Revolution, and was now contemplating an alliance with the Jacobin monster, Bonaparte himself. Paul, the servant of God, was not afraid of his peasants or his soldiers. When the time came he would give freedom to the peasants, he would himself put on the Jacobin cap, but he would never surrender his God-given power into the hands of rebellion, sedition, and license. He feared the Jacobin monsters less than he did his court, his officers, his sons, and Russia's dark destiny.

It was for him, Paul, the faithful knight, to raise in Russia's darkness the sacred shield of the Rose and Cross—and then the name of the Emperor Paul, the demented tyrant, would be blessed in the ages to come. Amen.

He opened Novikov's book. The bluish pages were slightly stuck together.

"All that is left of a man's life is the perfume of his thoughts."

"Life moves fast, like a ship, leaving no trace or sign behind it."

"May the evening and the night of death never overtake thee of a sudden."

"Amen," Paul murmured as he blew out the candle. The spaniel stirred on its velvet mattress. Paul walked across the dark room, stretching out his arms before him. He lay down on the cool camp-bed, barely showing white in the darkness. There was the flickering twilight of the snowstorm in the room.

"The ship moves, leaving no trace or sign behind it." All things pass. . . .

He will bring the prisoners out of the fortresses, he will restore them to the honour and dignity of the Knights of St. John, he will cover them with the banners of the Empire. Had old Suvorov lived, they would have held a beautiful ceremony with the banners. . . .

He must ask for the Admiralty report in the morning, and see whether the warships at Cronstadt were being tarred, and the fire grenades and the tackle were ready.

Russian warships had the names of *Panteleimon the Healer, Hector, The Conception of St. Anne, Three Saints, Grace.* Anna's [1] name meant "Grace" in Hebrew. Anna's name was gracious light. He had not thought of her during the last few days, and yet she was always with him. Her initials were on the biggest Russian ship, on the grenadiers' casks, on the ships' flags. Anna and John, the Rose and

[1] The reference is to Princess Anna Gagarin, with whom Paul was in love.

Cross, the gracious Empire of God's knight, Paul. Amen.

. . . . . .

The Neva entrance into the Summer Garden was open. The wind rattled the rusty hinges of the gates, howled through the cast-iron railings, shook the branches of the trees that looked like monstrous shadows. The slanting mist of falling snow whirled in the air, the Neptunes and Venuses were buried in snowdrifts.

The bronze of the grenadiers' helmets gleamed in the avenue. The wind tore at the wet locks of the soldiers' wigs, matted like felt. Bayonets scraped against each other.

The Summer Garden suddenly filled with noise. A long-drawn echo resounded. The crows were cawing, and the stormy night seemed to be cawing too. The grenadiers huddled together, white with the snow. Someone shouted words of command in the wind, covering his face with his wet cloak. The wind half drowned the words:

"March . . . puppies! . . . You are not afraid of cannon, but the crows frighten you.... March!"

By the guard-room a lantern held by a steel paw swung to and fro. A slanting whirlwind of snow beat against the window panes. They crossed the steep bridge in single file. Their backs were white,

their cloaks were puffed out by the wind. They did not strike a light, they never spoke—blows from a cane would be the punishment for a loudly spoken word. There was trouble in the Tsar's house!

A huge coach showed black in the gates, its top covered with snow. There was no light in the guard-room. The sound of the clock striking a quarter-past twelve floated on the wind. The grenadiers were already forming up in the yard. They could not see what troops were on the opposite side —only the cartridge pouches and the braid on the hats showed white: they might have been either musketeers or grenadiers. The musket-butts were grounded with a muffled thud; there was to be no stamping, no noise. There was trouble in the Tsar's house!

The officers ran to the doors, shaking the snow off their hats and undoing their wet scarves. The soldiers were left alone in the yard, leaning on their muskets. The slanting snow was beating in their faces.

"Your Majesty, Your Majesty!"

Argamakov, the aide-de-camp of the Preobrazhensky battalion, knocked at the Emperor's bedroom. Melting snow squelched under his feet.

"Your Majesty, Your Majesty! . . ."

The solitary bark of a dog resounded shrilly. Platon Zubov backed away from the door, pushing

with his elbows. Bennigsen clutched him from behind by the fat shoulders.

"Where are you off to? You brought us here yourself!"

And he knocked violently at the door with his palm:

"Open!"

The door shook and the dog was silent.

"Open, open!" They pressed against the door, banging at it with their fists. The door gave way and they all stumbled forward into the darkness. But they steadied themselves on the threshold, standing clumsily with their legs apart.

The screen by the bed had been moved, the candle was on the floor. There were the Tsar's black sword, cane, and hat over the bed. The bedclothes were rumpled. Bennigsen raised the candle and moved it along the dark corners; his face was lighted from below: a big nose and hollow cheeks.

They were all wearing their dress uniforms, with three-cornered hats under their arms, and swords at the side, military fashion. They crowded on the threshold, breathing heavily. Their decorations and diamond stars gleamed in the semi-darkness. A cloud of vapour rose over the group. Platon Zubov said something and whistled. And because he whistled, that huge bedroom and the still warm crumpled bed, the night, the conspiracy, the Em-

peror's abdication—all the solemn and unheard-of things for the sake of which they had curled their wigs, donned their dress uniforms, and put on their decorations, had suddenly become different, inevitable. Someone bent down and looked under the table. They moved the chairs.

Bennigsen singed his eyelashes with the candle flame. The reflection of the candle danced on the wallpaper as he walked to the fireplace. He pointed with a shaking hand to the dark screen, and placing the candle on the floor, awkwardly unsheathed his sword with his left hand.

All stood still. Wet riding-boots and brass buckles gleamed in the candle-light. Platon Zubov hurriedly patted his wig, straightened the golden decoration on his neck, and bowed before the dark screen. Nicolas Zubov pulled at his pelisse and said haughtily:

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"In the name of the nation . . . In the name of the nation we demand Your Majesty's abdication."

And lifting his leg very high he stepped over the candle. Everyone followed him. Nicolas Zubov noiselessly shifted the screen:

"Come out, Your Majesty."

Paul was standing behind the screen by the black, empty grate. . . . A white sheet was thrown over his bony shoulders, grey locks hung about his cheeks, and his bare toes were twitching. The white spaniel

was crouching at his feet, trembling all over. Bennigsen lowered his sword.

"It's the end, Your Majesty. Alexander has been proclaimed Emperor, and we arrest you by his orders."

Paul's fingers stirred, clutching at the sheet on his breast. His round eyes were staring fixedly into the darkness above the heads of the crowd.

"Abdicate!" Platon Zubov shouted angrily, waving his hat. The sound of a dull roar and the tramping of many feet came from the staircase. Platon Zubov turned round, his handsome but insignificant face quivered, he dropped his hat and rushed to the doors; the others followed him, a pushing and breathless crowd.

Bennigsen was left alone with Paul. Blinking blindly with his singed eyelashes he parted his legs in heavy riding-boots and pressed the point of the sword to the Emperor's breast.

"A—a—ah!" Paul shuddered and screamed breathlessly.

The crowd that had been tramping up the stairs burst into the room, letting in a cloud of fog. The screen fell, putting out the candle, and the crowd whirled round in the darkness. Bending double, Bennigsen dived towards the door.

"Ah, you son of a bitch!" someone shouted passionately and eagerly. Someone's sharp elbows were

raised swiftly, and the sheet flew over people's heads like a grey flag.

Alone in the dark library, Bennigsen was examining the Imperial portraits. He raised the candle right up to the yellow patches of noses and cheeks. His singed eyelashes blinked.

A whiff of warm, sour-smelling air came from the dark bedroom. The men came out of it, one after the other, with uneven steps, staggering as though drunk. They were straightening their wigs that had slipped on their foreheads, undoing their crumpled scarves, buttoning their uniforms, and thrusting under their waistcoats their torn ruffles and black ties.

Their faces could not be seen in the dark, but their breathing was loud and hurried.

Then Bennigsen, with the candle in his hand, cautiously moved along the wall towards the bedroom. Bits of china crunched under the general's boots.

Paul lay by the fireplace, his hands under his chin. His bare, sinewy legs, covered with bruises, were stretched unnaturally. Dead, Paul seemed as big as Peter the Great. The dark-skinned head was swollen, the tip of the tongue was showing between the crooked teeth. Close to his mouth there was a dark pool of blood on the parquet.

The general stepped back, and then the white

spaniel stole out of the fireplace. It wetted its paw in the blood and shook it. Whining gently, it began licking Paul's blood-stained cheek and his forehead.

Bennigsen shuddered, and threw the candlestick at the dog.

. . . . . .

Downstairs, the front door of the Palace was noisily flung open against a background of whirling snow. Count Pahlen came in. Flinging back his black cloak he asked his aide-de-camp:

"Is the body cold?"

"Yes, I have told you already."

"Then I'll go up."

Count Pahlen ran upstairs, two steps at a time, his decorations and the silver chain of his sword ringing as he ran. In the library he was overtaken by Count Valerian Zubov, a fat man with a wooden leg and a puffy face like an old woman's.

"Count, wait, I'll come with you. . . . We are too late. Wait, please."

They had all crowded into the bedroom that was full of damp fog. Bolhovskoy, captain of the Izmailovsky Regiment, raised the huge negro-like head by one of its grey, powdered locks soaked with blood. He let it go again; Paul's head fell on the parquet with a dull thud.

Half lying in an arm-chair, Platon Zubov was undoing the silk scarf round his soft white neck: he felt stifled. With a small ivory knife he deftly and carefully cleaned his collar from powder.

"That will do," he said, with a grimace. "Cover him up with something . . . with that sheet."

Count Pahlen, breathless with running, stopped in the doorway.

"But we must lock the bedroom; the Castle is full of soldiers."

"I agree; it's high time." Platon Zubov frowned and handed Pahlen a heavy snuff-box: "Please?"

"Thank you, I don't take snuff."

"Ah!" Zubov quickly wiped the blood from the snuff-box and shut the square lid with a snap.

"I am going to Alexander," said Pahlen. "Tidy the room, please—and it ought to be aired."

All stood still, looking at the dark heap as though waiting for something. The wind shook the glass and brought in the mournful sound of the fortress clock striking a quarter. Naval Commander Klokachov threw a sheet over Paul's body. It looked like a heap of snow by the fireplace.

General Bennigsen was by the wall between two book-cases. He looked as though he had been thrust into that narrow space and hanged there.

"Sh! Sh! . . . the dog."

They slowly looked round at Bennigsen.

"What dog? It's your imagination."

"His dog. Hush!"

Something showed white by the fireplace under an overturned chair. With a cautious, catlike movement, Platon Zubov put the candle on the floor and crouched beside it, one end of his scarf hanging down. Resting his palms on the parquet he whispered:

"Doggy, come here. . . . Come here, foolish doggy!"

All crouched round him. Bennigsen alone remained standing by the wall.

The dog rushed out from under the chair and jumped on to the white heap. On the wallpaper the shadows of wigs, noses, eager half-opened lips looked like a huge menacing monster stretching out its paws to the white trembling creature—as though to stroke it, to tickle its ear. Holding their breath, they tried to entice the dog away:

"Silly little doggy. . . . Come here. . . . Now then! . . . Doggy, doggy!"

The spaniel jumped off the corpse, and they all got up. Platon Zubov pushed the chair over to the wall.

"It's gone under there. . . . I'll catch it."

Suddenly he drew away his hand with a cry of pain:

"Ah, it's bitten me!"

The bedroom door was flung open: Count Pahlen in his black cloak stood on the threshold.

"What do you want here, you devil?"

"What are you talking about?"

"The dog."

"What dog?"

"It's in the passage."

"Catch it—catch it!"

The crowd rushed into the passage. Pahlen held Bennigsen by the sleeve.

"General, stay."

"The dog . . ."

"Nonsense. You look untidy. Button your coat."

"I know." Bennigsen buttoned his coat with his big fingers. "I know. . . . The dog."

"Nonsense, I tell you. Help me to lift him and to lock the bedroom. Soldiers are all round."

Pahlen held fast to the general's cuff.

"It's all over. The Archangel's trumpet wouldn't wake him now. One of us had to go to the devil: it was his turn. He had sent for Arakcheyev. I detained him at the town gates."

"Quite so. . . . Let go my sleeve."

"Nonsense."

"Do let me go."

Bennigsen wrenched himself away and ran into the passage, stamping with his boots.

Grenadier Corporal Rodion Koshevok was on duty that night at the Tsarevitch Alexander's apartments near the circular staircase leading to the Fontanka, by the statue of Flora and Hercules. About midnight the corporal heard a stealthy step. He thought it was the Tsar who could not sleep.

It was not the Tsar, however, but a tall, fair officer whom he did not know, dressed in the Semionovsky uniform with the blue collar. Creeping noiselessly by the mirror, hiding behind a column for a moment, he quietly turned the key in every door leading to the Empress's apartments.

The corporal looked carefully, and recognised the Tsarevitch Alexander. He saluted. Alexander rushed away into the darkness.

Soon after midnight many gentlemen ran to the Tsar's apartments, then back, then back again. The corporal trembled. There was trouble in the Tsar's house.

Then all was still. Presently the lights of many candles showed in the depth of the corridor. A dog flashed by like a white arrow, jumped on the pedestal of the statue under which the corporal stood, and crouched behind his back. Soon he was surrounded by gentlemen with candles.

"Soldier, have you seen a dog?" shouted one of them, who had his finger wrapped in a silk handkerchief.

The corporal trembled, his rough face was tense and flushed. The dog behind him was trembling too. There was trouble in the Tsar's house.

"A white dog—it ran this way—have you seen it?"

"It's no use asking him—he's gone silly."

"It's in the yard."

The lights moved down the staircase towards the hall. Nicolas Zubov pushed the felt-covered door, and the snow and darkness seemed to rush in from outside—the candles went out. Zubov ran down the steps, pressing his hand to his throat—he was hot and afraid of catching a chill out in the frost; he had taken a deep breath ready to shout, "Brothers—the dog—catch it!" when he suddenly drew back.

Soldiers' faces wreathed with the thin cloud of their breath showed white in the dark courtyard. The icy wind caught Zubov in the mouth and lifted his hair, which was moist with perspiration, covering it instantly with a coating of ice.

"Joy, brothers!" he shouted. "Your tormentor is dead—hurrah!"

No one took up the shout. Frozen grenadiers in three-cornered hats covered with snow moved forward silently and took a step towards the porch.

The drummer of the Grenadier Battalion, Anton Kalavainen, a bony old Finn with a withered face, shifted his frozen drum and shouted angrily:

"He was a father to us, not a tormentor."

Blinded by the frost, Zubov ran into the hall:

"The soldiers are coming. . . . They've found out. . . . Mutiny. . . ."

The grenadiers, with their muskets levelled as though ready to charge, were going up the stairs with a heavy, measured tread. Their rough faces were wreathed in vapour, snow was falling from their hats. The drummer, Anton Kalavainen, walked in front, as he did when going into an attack, and held the black drum-sticks tight in his bony fist, ready to raise the thunder of alarm.

A gust of wind rushed through the dark rooms, doors banged, the bronzes rattled; the cold draught stirred the sheet over the dead Emperor; then the grenadiers, with their muskets levelled, entered the Castle.

Pahlen raised his arms, and the diamonds glittered in his white uniform.

"Grenadiers, turn back! Guards, halt!"

The drummer drew back, the muskets were brought down with a clatter.

The black cloak swept through the air like a wing—Pahlen stepped quickly forward; murmuring, the grenadiers drew farther back into the frost and darkness whence they had come.

"His Imperial Majesty the Tsar Paul Petrovitch has, by the will of God, passed away. Hurrah for the Emperor Alexander!"

Pahlen struck the drummer on the shoulder with his leather glove.

"Why are you silent? Don't you understand Russian? The Emperor Alexander—hurrah!"

Looking wildly at Pahlen as they slowly moved backwards, the grenadiers took a deep breath and shouted, "Hurrah!" purple in the face with the effort. The officers raised their swords, and a hoarse "Hurrah" resounded in the courtyard and in the Emperor Alexander's apartments. A crowd of officers was standing there in a veil of cold mist, and the floor was covered with dark pools of melted snow. Uvarov sat on a jasper table, dangling his legs and laughing. No one looked at Alexander—he was forgotten.

Alexander's face was buried in the leather sofa cushion. His long legs, in white stockings, were shaking with sobs. He was lying like this, fully dressed, at one o'clock in the morning, when Nicolas Zubov bent over him.

"Make haste and get up. Go to the soldiers. . . . He is no more. . . . You are the Tsar. Get up, Your Majesty."

Zubov smelt of wine and sweat. Alexander only clutched the leather cushion with his delicate fingers.

"What are you talking about? . . . I don't want to. . . . I am no Tsar. I ordered a carriage to be

ready in the courtyard for my father. He has been taken to the fortress."

"No, the carriage hasn't been necessary. He is dead."

Alexander sank on the sofa as though struck down. He was no longer sobbing, but quietly moaning through his tears. His fair hair had clung to his cheeks.

Emerging out of a cloud of tobacco-smoke, Pahlen approached Alexander, the decorations clinking on his breast as he walked. He tapped Alexander on the shoulder with his leather glove:

"Don't be childish—come and show yourself as Tsar; the army is waiting for you. Do you hear that 'Hurrah'? Help me to lift him, gentlemen."

Alexander was led by the arms. Uvarov straightened his crumpled white coat, wet with tears, and wiped the wet diamond buttons. He took from Alexander's fine fingers his wet, crumpled handkerchief.

"Your handkerchief is quite wet, Your Majesty —take mine. . . ."

Everything was swimming with tears before the young Emperor's eyes.

. . . . . .

Koshelev, a lieutenant of the Grenadier Regiment, was called with his detachment to the Castle at day-

break, when a damp, warm wind was blowing and thaw had set in. The troops approached the Castle like a procession of shadows. The loud bursts of "Hurrah" had somehow alarmed Koshelev. By the railings of the Summer Garden he saw a young hussar in a grey cloak who from behind looked like a boy. Koshelev thought that the hussar was sick and that that was why he was holding with both hands on to the railings.

"You are unwell, sir," Koshelev said kindly, walking up to the hussar across a snowdrift. The young man turned his thin face. There was something touching in the way strands of snow-covered hair were blown by the wind on to his cheek. He really was a mere boy. His teeth were chattering.

"No, no . . . I am well . . . I have seen him. He is there. I have seen him myself. They have killed him. Oh, God, why have they killed him?"

A sudden chill ran over Koshelev's body. He understood why the troops had been called to the Castle and why they were shouting "Hurrah."

"I saw him lying there," the hussar repeated, looking at Koshelev and probably not seeing him or knowing what he was saying. "My God, how awful! . . . Why,—why?"

"Come along," said Koshelev, taking him by the arm.

Grey clouds of smoke floated across the Summer

Garden and a damp wind rustled in the tree-tops. The boy did not let go Koshelev's arm. As they walked on, he told him his name—Poltoratsky. He remained in the yard with the soldiers.

Koshelev went into the Castle. In the dark rooms the tables, screens, and arm-chairs were heaped together as though there had just been a fire or troops had been quartered in the place. The air was thick with cold vapour. A crowd of officers wandered about the rooms, examining the furniture and the wallpaper, talking. They did not seem to know what to do with themselves.

The Tsar's bedroom looked like a well of darkness, and in one corner of it something gleamed white. Someone brought a candle to it and raised the sheet.

Then Koshelev saw a swollen negro's head, with clots of blood on the eyes—the blind eyes of Œdipus. Wax dropped off the candle on the dead man's temple. Someone behind Koshelev said:

"That's what the Tsar looks like—they've done for him."

Koshelev left the bedroom. He was trembling all over and feeling as sick as the boy Poltoratsky. He almost ran through the dim rooms. There were sentries at the Palace doors.

The sentries at the Emperor's bedroom door crossed their swords. A barefooted woman in a nightdress, her hair hanging down her back, was

running to and fro with small steps in front of the bayonets, snatching at the points. She did not weep or scream, she only repeated in a hoarse whisper:

"Let me in—let me in. . . ."

The soldiers looked bewildered, the captain saluted with his sword as she ran past him, but he had strict orders not to let anyone into the bedroom, not even Her Imperial Majesty.

Countess Lieven, in a heavy bonnet with velvet roses, vainly tried to throw a white cloak over the Empress's shoulders. She succeeded at last. The Empress stood still for a moment, pushing back her grey hair, and took a step forward.

"Ah . . . they don't let me in. . . . Ah, then I'll tell them the truth! Don't listen to them, soldiers; they are traitors and criminals, they have murdered my poor husband, your kind Emperor. . . . Seize them, dear soldiers! I am your Empress; defend me. . . . A—a—ah!"

The Empress suddenly sat down on the floor, crying out in a small shrill voice, "A—a—ah!" Countess Lieven said over her head, "Water." The captain lowered his sword.

A young, black-eyed grenadier, Mihailo Perekrestov, brought water to the Empress. He bent close to her and said in a frightened and gentle voice:

"Drink it, mother, God bless you—it's good water, not poisoned."

Koshelev went out into the yard where Poltoratsky was waiting for him.

"Let us go," he said to the hussar, taking him by the arm; "we are not needed here. I'll call my men away."

They walked side by side on the firm snow towards the barracks. Koshelev brought Poltoratsky to the regimental guardhouse to give him a hot drink and let him lie down: the boy was shaking all over.

Poltoratsky lay down obediently and covered himself over with his cloak. His fair hair was scattered over the dirty pillow. Koshelev blew out the candle.

Behind the wooden partition there was a boom of voices and clatter of muskets: the soldiers had come back from the Castle.

"Do you hear?" Poltoratsky whispered.

"I do. Hush! . . ."

Sitting on a stool, Koshelev leaned his head against the partition. The muffled sound of voices came from the other side of it.

"She had only a shift on, mates, and nothing on her feet; I gave her the water and she . . ."

" 'Died,' indeed—we know how he died. They strangled him."

"Mercy on us, surely not?"

"The gentry strangled him. They did it right enough, the devils!"

"Whatever is to become of us now?"

"What are we to expect, now that no justice is left in the world? There was one just man, and they strangled him; they put out the light. Darkness will come upon Russia."

"Swine, that's what the gentry are! Killing's too good for them."

"Be quiet."

"They've killed the Emperor, brothers—the Emperor! We are done for now."

"Hush, I tell you—or you'll get a flogging. We must say nothing now, but we'll tell the truth to his son. We'll tell him what those fine gentlemen have done to his father—I'll bring the dog. Hush!"

The voices drew farther away. Koshelev slowly turned to Poltoratsky. They were both trembling now.

. . . . . .

It was already light when Count Pahlen brought Villiers, the surgeon of the Semionovsky Regiment, into the Imperial bedroom.

In the bedroom the doctor slowly unbuttoned his snuff-stained green uniform and put on an extra pair of spectacles. He hung the coat on the screen, over the blood-stained sheets, and rolled up his sleeves.

The dead man's left temple was oozing blood where Zubov had struck it with his square gold snuff-box—a present from Catherine the Great.

In gloomy absorption Villiers began painting the dead face with yellow wax. He covered the wound on the temple with flesh-coloured varnish. Using several paint-brushes he worked at the swollen face as though he had before him the sleeping head of a tragic actor who had to take part in a gala pageant in the morning.

Many guardsmen and courtiers were still sitting about or walking to and fro in the Castle halls. Platon Zubov was warming himself at the fire, his neck wrapped up with a silk scarf. When he bent down to the fire one could see that his handsome face was covered with a network of fine wrinkles. Prince Yashvil stood before him, laughing dryly.

The Grand Duke Constantine appeared in the doorway. His dull reddish hair was dishevelled at the temples; he too had not slept, and his face looked greyish and puffy. He moved his thick eyebrows and put a golden lorgnette to his eyes.

"I should hang them all," he said, and went out banging the door so violently that the bronze Medusas rattled. Many people turned round, and Platon Zubov looked up from the fire, his face flushed with the heat.

A number of candles burned all day in the Em-

peror's bedroom in a cloud of yellowish mist, and in the evening the first requiem service was sung.

The coffin stood in a big room draped with black crape. The bronze ornaments of the doors glittered dully under the crape. The diamonds on the decorations, sceptres, crowns, and Imperial regalia scintillated on the black tables.

The Emperor, dressed in the Holstein uniform, lay in a coffin placed on a velvet-covered dais, with his feet to the window. His hands, in cream-coloured doeskin gloves, were crossed on his breast, and a small ikon rested against them. Paul's cheeks were tied with a white silk handkerchief. During the night a stubble of beard had grown on his cheeks. A black three-cornered hat with silver braiding was slightly tilted over the left temple and cast a shadow over his face.

The sudden crescendo in the requiem singing disturbed the flame of the candles that cast passing shadows over Paul's bristly chin; the candles, too, were wrapped in black crape, and their light was reflected in shiny patches on people's foreheads.

Courtiers and chief officers of the Imperial guard were present at the first requiem: the Military Governor of Petersburg, His Excellency Count von der Pahlen; the Chief of the first Cadet Corps, His Excellency Prince Platon Zubov, and his brothers—chiefs of the second Cadet Corps and the Sumsky

Hussar Regiment; the Commandant of the Castle, Argamakov; Major-General Bennigsen; the Commanders of the Preobrazhensky, Semyonovsky, Izmailovsky, and Keksholm Life Guards, of the Horse Guards, and the Senate battalions; and also the colonels, captains, and lieutenants of those and other regiments of the Petersburg garrison—Bibikov, Bolhovskoy, Skariatine, Prince Yashvil, Tatarinov, Klokatchev, and many others, with pale, distracted faces, their wigs in disorder, their scarves tied carelessly, and their clothes not brushed.

A gilded lion's paw on the velvet coffin rattled suddenly. General Bennigsen staggered. Prince Zubov, who was daintily raising his arm to make a graceful sign of the cross, supported the general.

"What's the matter?" Zubov asked. "Aren't you well?"

"The dog is there. . . . It's sitting on the coffin . . . by the little ikon."

"There's no dog; it's your fancy."

"It's your fancy, Bennigsen," Count Pahlen whispered; "There is no dog in the coffin."

"Quite so," Bennigsen answered, screwing up his singed eyelids. "It's my fancy; I am unwell. Yes, quite so."

. . . . . .

A herald in a crested helmet, looking like a knight

in heavy golden armour, rode on to St. Isaac's bridge.

In the morning soldiers of the Horse Guards were sent out as heralds, shouting so that the dark veins stood out on their faces, to inform the capital of the accession of His Majesty the Emperor Alexander to the Russian Throne.

The yellow sun was shining on Petersburg. Vapour rose from the brown heaps of snow by the gates. The snow in the Nevsky looked like brown porridge. The glass of the street lamps glittered in the sun. The bright red glove over a Hamburg merchant's shop was flapping in the wind.

There was a dull rattle of wheels in the Nevsky. Carriage windows were like so many suns. A new style of driving was being tried on the quay—with postilions in front. Their fur coats dragging on the wet pavements, people took off before each other their damp, fluffy three-cornered hats, feeling slightly shy at showing their hair cropped in the new fashion and no powder on. The old-fashioned locks of the tyrant's days had already been cut off.

The golden rider on St. Isaac's bridge tottered under the weight of his golden armour, and fell fainting off his horse, splashing heavy mud about him. Work-people in homespun coats, pedlars, and sellers of mead rushed away, then came forward again. A money-changer from the Arcade, with a pinched, wrinkled face, barked out of the crowd:

"He's shouted himself silly. . . . It's a bad omen —his falling off the horse."

In the Imperial Castle all the windows were open to let out the requiem gloom and the smell of the candles.

In the Guards barracks all the windows were open too. In the grenadier corporals' room plank beds stretched along the walls, home-made shelves were fixed over the beds. The shelves held the soldiers' boxes with dress uniforms, equipment, clean shirts, buttons, tobacco, a ball of wax with needles stuck into it, an old brush, a bit of soap wrapped up in a paper, and a cherry-red silk handkerchief deeply marked at the folds and taken out only once a year for the Easter Day merry-making. Above the boxes there were small ikons, with wax tapers stuck to them. The invisible faces of the saints were roughened by the smoke.

Wooden hat-blocks stood in front of the semicircular windows, and it seemed as though a line of yellow dwarfs were drawn up there; by the wall opposite there was a musket stand. Bundles of soldiers' sword-belts and cartouch boxes hung on wooden pegs above it.

A tub of pure water with a battered iron ladle attached to it stood by the stove, which was heated night and day; the floor was swept clean and sprin-

kled with water: such was the warm abode of victories and laurels, the home of Russian warriors.

One night the corporals were sitting on the bench by the stove. Their wrinkled faces and the hard bristles on their sunken cheeks were lit up by the flames. One man was still wearing his red cloth tie, another had bared his copper-coloured chest, and the brass ikon round his neck glowed red in the firelight. The soldiers were smoking in silence in front of the stove, sending the smoke up the chimney.

The bald-headed corporal, Rodion Koshevok, Afrikan's pious friend, barefooted and in his underclothes, was warming his back at the stove. Young Mihailo Perekrestov, pale and dark-eyed, was sitting on the bench next to Akim Govoruhin—a desperate gambler in his youth but now a disciple of Rodion. On his other side was Illarion the Flint; when young he had been gay and reckless, but Suvorov himself had given him the nickname of Flint, and now he made up such beautiful songs about the soldiers' life that no better singer could be found in all the Russian army. They were Alpine veterans, Suvorov's silent heroes.

The drummer, Anton Kalevainen, sat Turkish fashion on his bed in the dark, chewing a big chunk of rye bread sprinkled with coarse salt.

"This morning one of them came," Mihailo Per-

ekrestov whispered, gazing at the fire with his dark eyes. "Whatever is his name? . . . That count, you know. . . . And I heard it stirring! My heart sank: I thought he would hear. But he didn't."

"One must keep an eye on some of the grenadiers," the singer Illarion said thoughtfully, also looking into the fire. "Some of them begin to boast when they have had a drop too much. . . ."

"Who has been b-boasting?" asked Rodion, with his slight stammer.

"Why, Klim, the tall man on the right flank."

Kalevainen finished the crust, put the last crumbs into his mouth, and grumbled:

"Tell Klim that if he talks, we'll give him a good thrashing."

"I did tell him."

"Hush, there it is!"

Rodion raised his finger, all turned to the fire and listened. Mihailo Perekrestov smiled a shy, beautiful smile and said:

"That's it, mates, sure enough. . . . There's our secret."

There had been a secret in the corporals' room ever since Tuesday, March 12th, in the sixth week of Lent. On that day Corporal Rodion Koshevok, returning from sentry duty at the Palace, unbuttoned his coat, and let out on his bed a white dog—

Emperor Paul's white spaniel. Its hair was matted with blood.

The spaniel nosed about the bed and jumped behind the stove, very nearly knocking down the posts on which the soldiers dried their rags. The Tsar's white dog disappeared behind the stove that Tuesday and had not been seen since.

For many nights Corporal Rodion rustled the pages of the Bible, scratching something on a clean sheet of paper torn out of the holy book. At the very end of March, wrapping up his note, three hard-boiled eggs, a pinch of salt, a roll, and two five-copeck pieces in a red silk handkerchief, Rodion went to the madhouse to see Afrikan.

They told him that Afrikan was violent, and refused to admit him, but they took his parcel. Scratching the back of his ear with a quill, the clerk took the corporal's note too. It was written in Russian and Slavonic letters, some of them upside down, in a soldier's illiterate handwriting:

"Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever. Count the letters,[1] forty-five, the years of his life, and so holiness has left Russia. He is not with us, but it is hidden with us till the time comes. Amen."

"What gibberish!" the clerk said. "Take it back, there's no sense in it. And he has no thoughts to

[1] In Russian this sentence of Psalm xciii. has forty-five letters.

spare for your scribble; he thinks he is Moses, and is writing new tablets of the law."

"T-tablets of the law!" the corporal repeated, and bowed to the clerk. "Please give him the note too, sir."

"You are a queer one. It's all one to me. I'll give it him. Leave the money here. A Moses doesn't want coppers."

"Certainly, sir; keep the money for yourself."

The dark corner behind the stove in the corporals' room was swept clean of cobwebs, and some hay was placed there; every morning the soldiers put there some bread and cabbage soup and clean water in a pewter mug.

The white dog occasionally peeped out of its corner. It yelped and thrust its hot nose into the soldiers' palms. They did not take their hands away.

. . . . . .

Early in May the soldiers of the Guards were given white trousers of a new pattern, with a strap under the shoe. Regimental barbers cut off the grenadiers' locks and plaits. The brass helmets with the white Maltese cross, and the words, "God is with us—Grace," were taken to the storeroom, and the soldiers received instead new bucket-shaped caps of patent leather, called shakos; they had white tassels on one side, a white brush, and a brass peak topped

by a double-headed eagle with outstretched wings and lightning in its claws.

Early in May, when all the barrack windows were open and a cool wind was blowing through the corridors, Corporal Akim Govoruhin roused Rodion Koshevok at daybreak:

"Rodion Stepanitch, wake up, sir! Something dreadful has happened."

Koshevok put his feet on the floor, shivering with cold.

"What is it?"

"Our dog . . . our dog is lost, sir."

The grenadiers, barefoot and in hempen shirts, crowded by the stove. Akim Govoruhin was wringing his hands:

"I was on duty, mates, and as I put fresh hay and clean water for it, I fumbled behind the stove and touched the wall, but the dog wasn't there; it was gone."

They took out into the light the crust of bread the dog had been gnawing, the earthenware pot of soup already coated with fat, and a pewter mug filled with clean water.

The grenadiers examined it all and stood in silence by the stove, hanging their heads, which were cropped in the new fashion. Rodion Koshevok said, stammering:

"Th-that means that we t-too weren't worthy.

This isn't right. I m-must search for it. I will go away f-from here and wander about till I find it."

. . . . . .

At that early hour Lieutenant Koshelev was crossing the barrack square. He had been on duty during the night and had had little or no sleep; his face looked very tired, and he was perceptibly shivering with the morning freshness in his cloak. Koshelev had been suffering from a heavy sense of weariness, disappointment, and vexation ever since the memorable night of the twelfth of March.

When he thought of that night he saw before him the dead man's face, with the nostrils full of blood, and dark bruises instead of eyes—the eyes of blind Œdipus. All that Koshelev had once thought of freedom and of establishing a Republic in Russia, all the absurd and heavy speeches at officers' suppers by candlelight, now made him feel as sick as the memory of that disfigured face.

Koshelev thought that the words which had roused sweet tremors and joyful fear in him would always remain mere words. He could see no change in the men around him or in what they did, and he began to think that they had killed the Emperor merely to make it easier for themselves to gamble and be rowdy, neglect the service and wear civilian

clothes. This seemed to be the chief meaning of freedom for the men he knew. He felt sick and ashamed to see the people hastily make way for him in the street with low bows; those bearded serfs whom he despised, pitied, and hated were the same as ever. It might be so before the twelfth of March, but it could not and ought not to be so now—or what was the use of killing him?

The disgust he was feeling made him almost ill. It seemed to him that something vile, for which he, too, was to blame, had been done needlessly, but that it could not be averted and the consequences of it were more than either he or anyone else could change.

Koshelev gave up many of his former friends and habits, and no longer went to the Masonic meetings; the grand words and the musty-smelling black curtains in the never-ventilated room depressed him. He was ashamed when his brother-Masons yawned during the dull ritual of the meetings and grew lively at supper, talking eagerly of promotions, orders of merit, and regimental affairs. It might be so before March, but it could not be so now—or else why had they killed him? Koshelev did not know what ought to have changed, but he felt that everyone in Russia, and life as a whole, ought to have become different after March—or else nothing could ever justify the sufferings of the unhappy Emperor

Paul. In the night Koshelev wept for him and prayed.

In those days he often thought of his little brother, Pavlusha, left in Moscow in the charge of nurses and instructors, and wrote long letters to his tutor, Girard.

When Koshelev was on night duty at the barracks he often read the Bible, fitting a candle over the wooden box on which he sat. He had never read the Bible before, and now, during those night readings, he began to grasp something new—some humble and painful truth that he could not have put into words; he began to understand that men's talk about changing and improving life never comes true, that life is not in human hands and does not obey men's words and wishes; that the mysterious power of God is alone accomplished in everything that happens on earth. He thought with emotion of the strange words of St. Paul, that the kingdom of God is not in words but in power.

The only person who came sometimes to see him was Poltoratsky, the little hussar with long fair hair and hollow cheeks. Koshelev was growing used to his silent, bright-eyed visitor, when Poltoratsky suddenly went to join his father in the province of Kaluga.

Black-haired, with velvety sparks in his greenish thoughtful eyes, Koshelev was barely twenty.

Reserved and coldly polite to everyone, he soon came to be considered proud and unsociable by his fellow-officers; and after March he withdrew from them completely and devoted himself to work and reading. He lived alone with his new thoughts, in an oppressive and anxious expectation of something inevitable.

THE FIRE

THE FIRE

I

In the morning twilight of September 2nd, 1812, police officers escorted Kutuzov's heavy carriage from the Dorogomilovsky gates to the Yauzsky bridge.

They ran with their heads bent forward, like dogs tracking prey; one might have thought they were firemen running down the empty street. Kutuzov wrapped his blue cloak round him; his fat body shook with the jolting of the carriage.

At Fili, while the generals were angrily disputing in a tiny hut that smelt of peasants, military cloth, and muddy boots, the Commander-in-Chief had sat in the dark in silence, looking like a shapeless, heavy mass. Only the old man's breathing could be heard. He brought the council of war to an end, tapping the table with his puffy palm.

"The thing is not to lose the army," he had said with a lisp, and his double chin that hung over the gold-embroidered collar trembled as he spoke. "Losing Moscow doesn't mean losing Russia."

He got up heavily, nearly upsetting the bench—his old legs had grown stiff with sitting still.

"Giving up Moscow will inevitably bring about the defeat of the enemy. I order retreat. . . ."

The police called in subdued voices, "Way! Make way! Hey!" The Commander-in-Chief seemed to be asleep. His wrinkled eyelids were tightly closed, he did not wish to see Moscow; he had been weeping copiously and quietly all night long, resting his wet cheeks on his palm.

Raising a low cloud of dust the carriage dashed along the boulevards.

Moscow was murmuring as though with the sound of many waters; by General Miloradovitch's orders the troops had started their march towards Kolomna, followed by baggage, cannon, carts, carriages, people.

The Cossacks were riding along the street in single file, their red pikes swaying in the air. A small, thick-set Cossack in blue trousers and a tall black cap was feeding his horse with bread by the iron gates of a nobleman's mansion, looking with his keen yellow eyes at the dust of the boulevards.

The Taganka and the Nikoloyamsky Street were blocked with the dark swaying mass of shakos, carriages, bayonets. The soldiers moved in a continuous stream, stamping, clattering, coughing.

Squeezed up to the fences, the officers' horses kicked and struggled.

A tall priest in a shabby cassock had stationed himself in the Taganka in the small hours of the morning. He held a huge wax candle and a small cross in one hand, and a sprinkler in the other. Long before daylight this unknown priest had been sprinkling the Russian warriors with holy water out of a battered silver bowl, and singing in a voice that sounded like a hoarse and mournful bark:

"O Lord, save Thy people. . . ."

A boy-officer with a pale, humorous face jumped off his horse. His shako fell under the feet of the crowd and was instantly trampled flat. The officer waved an amused good-bye to it, and kissed the priest's rough hand covered with dropping wax. His reddish hair blew about in the wind, and the cold drops of holy water fell on the boy's white forehead.

The soldiers rushed to kiss the cross, holding the skirts of their coats. Their leather shakos knocked against the cross. The big wax candle spluttered and the sprinkler struck the bowl with a ringing sound.

On the Yauzsky bridge, the Field-Marshal's carriage was caught in the moving mass of the troops. The wings of the carriage creaked. The Commander-in-Chief's white linen cap seemed to float over the dark, moving stream of shakos.

The bridge was blocked; mounted police made their way to it, brandishing their swords. Count Rastopchin on horseback overtook Kutuzov's carriage.

Galloping up to it, the count took off his fluffy three-cornered hat. He was dressed in his uniform, with epaulettes that shook at every movement he made, and a whip was twisted round the red cuff of his sleeve. His eyes were bloodshot, his face was shining with sweat, and little dirty streams trickled down his cheeks.

"Michail Illarionovitch, you had said we must defend Moscow to the last drop of our blood. . . . Your own letter. . . .

Kutuzov waved his small puffy hand:

"Go back to your duties. You are blocking the traffic on the bridge."

"I'll tell the Tsar . . . Such a thing . . . unheard of . . . the Tsar . . . Holy Moscow . . . the ashes of his fathers . . . "

"I order you, sir, to make haste and leave the bridge."

Kutuzov mispronounced some of his words, like a peasant.

The head of the count's white-faced horse sharply drew away from the carriage. Rastopchin's high-cheekboned face bobbed up and down among the helmets and shakos.

He suddenly pulled up his horse by the artillery waggons and shouted at the transport soldiers, brandishing his whip. The men, perched up on their shaky waggons, did not even turn to look at the count. Rastopchin was in charge of the evacuation, but no one took any notice of him.

The spectacle of the noisy rushing stream of people fascinated him, and from the way he looked on, letting the whip dangle down from his red cuff, one could see he was lost in thought.

His upper lip showed his big teeth placed wide apart.

He was meditating his secret cherished plan, that thrilled him with delight. He recalled his letters to Balashov and Bagration, and their answer, which he marked in many places in lead pencil, finding in them a confirmation of his own intentions. His idea was so much more significant than all their disgraceful military bungling, their retreats, plans, and dispositions of troops—it was only he, Rastopchin, who could have conceived it.

As early as August 14th, Prince Bagration had answered his letter simply and straightforwardly: "Yes, that is the right thing to do; better give it up to flames than to the enemy. For God's sake make the mob angry."

The count had underlined the words "give it up to flames" in a lead pencil. On August 13th he also

hinted at his intentions in a letter to Balashov, pretending that he was giving him the opinion of the people: "The people think we ought to follow the rule of leaving nothing to the villain. And if it be the will of Providence that to the eternal shame of Russia her enemy should enter Moscow, I am almost certain that the people will set fire to the town."

In his last letter to Balashov, written on August 27th, he very nearly declared his intentions in full: "If by ill luck it is impossible to save the capital, I will give up to the flames what remains of it."

"I did add 'what remains in the Arsenal and the commissariat,' or they might prevent me doing it, the curs . . . I'll show them!" Rastopchin muttered aloud, with malicious satisfaction. Had someone asked him with whom he was so angry, he would have answered, "With those villains—the French," though in his heart he did not consider them villains. But if he had asked the question of himself he would have answered that he was angry with that shapeless heap of fat, the marvellous Field-Marshal, who spoke like a peasant, wore a woman's beribboned bonnet in the morning, and was driven about in a carriage among the soldiers like a one-eyed doll; with Balashov, who looked like a woman in his prunella shoes; with Alexander, cold, subtle, and insinuating; with the whole gang of stupid generals, who understood nothing and feared every-

thing; with all that rabble of courtiers, army men, and university teachers; with the stinking serfs and all the silly disorder, gossip, sloth, and anarchy that he, Rastopchin, despised.

"I'll show them, the curs!" he muttered, spurring his horse. "I'll teach them."

As though trying to justify the bitter spite he always felt in the depths of his heart against all and everything around him, and addressing himself, as it were, to someone who could pass judgment upon him and all those "curs," Rastopchin thought:

"I'll teach them how true patriots ought to act. . . ."

The count's face, with its prominent cheek bones and teeth bared in a sneer, bobbed up and down among the shakos, bayonets, and horses' heads.

II

The Field-Marshal's carriage was raising a cloud of dust by the Old Believers' cemetery.

Dusty infantry soldiers were sitting in the dry ditches, their heavy muskets resting between their legs. Kutuzov looked at the brass numbers of the shakos—217—and lightly tapped his coachman in the back:

"Stop here for a time."

The carriage creaked and stopped. The dusty soldiers—some of them were winding dirty leg-wrappings round their legs, others lay bare-headed in the grey grass, gazing into the pale blue misty sky—got up reluctantly when they saw a portly old general.

A barefooted soldier who had been sitting on a bench dashed away, snatching his boots and musket.

Kutuzov flicked the dust off the bench with his blue cloak and sat down heavily. A button came undone on his white waistcoat, releasing loose folds of flesh. He was breathing hoarsely and heavily.

The rumble of the town was not heard so loudly here.

Kutuzov sat on the bench by the cemetery gates, waiting for General Miloradovitch, whom he had sent to the French with a letter.

Wreathed in transparent smoke and the damp mist of its gardens, Moscow was beginning to glow in the rising sun, with its glittering window-panes and the soaring domes of its churches that looked like golden mountains—a vision of resplendent beauty.

Pillars of light cut across the empty streets and leafy hazel trees rustled above the fences.

Pigeons were cooing by the Vassili Blazhenny Cathedral, waiting for grain. They flew in white

and grey flocks right over the pavement. Blue shadows full of morning freshness fell on the sand from the Kremlin wall.

A man in a nankeen coat, apparently a gentleman's servant, walked staggering towards the Kremlin with two pistols under his arm, casting a blue shadow before him. The man was drunk. The other day Count Rastopchin had said that everyone was to take ammunition from the Arsenal and go to the Kremlin to defend Moscow from the French. In the Arsenal the unshaven servant had had a cruel fight with a shop assistant about the pistols.

The servant startled the pigeons by the cathedral, and like glistening flecks they rose high in the air, leaving behind them a wave of rustling coolness.

House-serfs and soldiers who had straggled behind were smashing pothouses between the Yauzsky bridge and the Kolomensky gates. The clink of broken glass and the rattle of shutters echoed far through the clear air.

An artillery soldier in a crumpled shako was tearing down from a fence one of Rastopchin's placards which only the day before had attracted crowds. A clerk with his face tied in a silk handkerchief was reading breathlessly:

"A hundred thousand stalwart lads will come forth. We shall take our Lady of Iver and a hun-

dred and fifty cannon and finish the job altogether. The enemy rabble numbers a hundred and fifty thousand, and they are fed on boiled turnips and horse-flesh."

House-serfs and peasants listened gloomily, not understanding why they were ordered to take Our Lady, and what cannon were meant, and what they were to do about the rabble and the horse-flesh.

The artillery soldier, drunk and angry, scratched the fence with his nails, and swore.

General Miloradovitch, with an escort of hussars and Cossacks, galloped to the Dorogomilovsky gate, carrying Kutuzov's letter.

The red-haired, blue-eyed general, in a red, gold-embroidered coat, looked gaily and absent-mindedly at the mob thronging by the pothouses, at the soldiers running across the street holding up the skirts of their coats in the way women do; it was the usual unruliness of stragglers and deserters—the anarchy of a city surrendered to the enemy.

"Your Excellency, I believe they are there," said a young Don Cossack, galloping up to his side. The sun sparkled in his brown eyes.

"Ah, you donkey . . . " Miloradovitch took away from his red lips the short silver-mounted pipe he had had with him at Adda, Trebbia, and in the Alps. He laughed, showing his white teeth:

"Why, our men are still on the Poklonny Hill!"

The sonorous notes of a march stirred the air. A regiment was forming up in the empty square by the Kremlin wall. It was a Russian regiment—the coats were green. Miloradovitch turned his horse towards them.

"Why the devil are you marching to music?" he cried hotly.

Old men, like bony scarecrows, in loose green coats of Paul's time, red waistcoats, and absurd three-cornered hats with woollen braid, their thin plaits stiffened with copper wire, were drawn up in a line, tall and short men side by side, as in a German caricature. It was the Moscow garrison, which had been forgotten in the Kremlin.

"Holy Mother, there's a smart general," a soldier mumbled, backing away from the horse. "Mind you don't tread on our toes."

"Let the band stop playing! Where's the commanding officer?"

Miloradovitch waved his short pipe. Its silver mount glittered in the sun.

The old-fashioned march seemed to sigh as it stopped. A small, decrepit old man in a huge three-cornered hat and black velveteen gaiters with brass buttons—General Brozin—saluted with his wretched little sword, and said dryly, with a German accent:

"In Peter the Great's regulations it is laid down

that if the garrison of a surrendered fortress has permission to leave it freely and with colours flying, it should march to music."

Miloradovitch shouted defiantly in the old German's face:

"But the regulations say nothing about surrendering Moscow! Tell the band to stop, and march to the Kolomensky road and hurry—you're the last. . . . What an idea—marching to music! Regulations, indeed. . . . March off!"

The fresh breath of the open country greeted Miloradovitch when he came to the Poklonny Hill. His nostrils dilated. He called Akinfov, a captain of the Life Guard Hussars, and told him to hand the Field-Marshal's letter to Murat in the French vanguard.

Akinfov, pale with excitement, tightened the strap of his shako, and ran to his horse, clanking his sword.

Miloradovitch knew that the Field-Marshal's letter said: "If the French wish to occupy Moscow intact, they must not press on too fast but give us time to leave unmolested, with the transport and artillery. Otherwise General Miloradovitch will fight to the last man."

Miloradovitch settled more firmly in his saddle and gaily looked into the distance. He lit his pipe and pulled at it, puffing out a whiff of smoke.

Accompanied by trumpeters from Miloradovitch's escort, Akinfov galloped to the French outposts. He dismounted by the French chasseurs, who sat stiffly on their bay horses, in their blue coats with red facings, holding their carbines to their knees. The officer in command of the enemy's vanguard, the small and swarthy General Sebastiani, took Kutuzov's letter.

Soon afterwards the French vanguard, holding back their horses slowly, and as it were irresolutely, moved towards Moscow; the Field-Marshal's conditions were accepted.

Hot and perspiring, Miloradovitch galloped with his trumpeters to the bench by the cemetery, the gold embroidery of his red coat glittering through the dust.

The Field-Marshal was sitting on the bench with his eyes closed, as though he were dozing. His linen cap lay beside him, and his soft hair was stirring in the wind.

"Moscow is surrendered. The enemy is advancing to the gates. The Cossack pickets are leaving. . . ."

Miloradovitch's red hair was shining with perspiration that stood out in bright drops on his forehead. Kutuzov turned to the general first his blind eye, that seemed covered with a cold pearly film, and then glanced at him with the seeing eye that

glowed with a warm brown radiance. He crossed himself.

At two o'clock in the afternoon the French vanguard went up the Poklonny Hill.

The huge expanse of Moscow seemed to be floating lightly on a sea of lilac mist, its numberless domes glittering in the sun. Spellbound, the soldiers of the Emperor, dusty, hoarse, and sunburnt, walked on with bated breath. A joyful murmur ran through the ranks:

"*Moscou—ou—ou . . .* "

Suddenly they hastened their pace, walking faster and faster, clapping their hands with delight, laughing while tears trickled down the dusty cheeks, and crying out ecstatically:

"*Moscou, Moscou!*"

The resplendent Murat in velvet and ostrich feathers galloped to the Dorogomilovsky gate. At the striped barrier the French cuirassiers mingled with the Cossacks. Murat, laughing, threw his watch to them; at a sign from him his aides-de-camp did the same. The bearded Muscovites, glancing about them fearfully, threaded their way among the big horses and cuirasses and, once out of the throng, flew down an empty street, disappearing in a cloud of dust.

The vanguard halted; the Emperor himself was

to signal by a cannon-shot the general march on Moscow.

A small grey figure on horseback could be seen on the Poklonny Hill through a veil of dust; the Emperor was there, it was his telescope glittering in the sun.

The armies of the Viceroy were approaching the Tverskaya gate from Ruza and Zvenigorod; Poniatowsky was leading the Polish Uhlans from Vereya, Marshall Davout was behind them; the cavalry was moving amidst clouds of dust. In the golden mirage of Moscow the dome of the Orphanage stood out with a dazzling radiance.

With a sharp movement Napoleon tore a white glove off his hand. The glove burst along the seam. He spread a map on the hot saddle that smelt of leather. The Emperor's massive face was covered with olive-coloured tan. His coarse black hair was blown on to his cheeks.

The Emperor rode on to the Kamer-Collezhsky wall and stopped there. He waved his white glove, and the cannon-shot resounded like the thunder that begins a sultry storm.

With a sudden clank and a pull at the stirrups, the men jumped onto their horses, and hugging their muskets, sabres, and swords with metal oak-leaves on the handles, all rushed forward—cavalry, artil-

lery, infantry, French, Bavarians, Poles, Spaniards, Italians.

The rumble of wheels, the stamping of feet, the shouts were merged into one continuous roar. With eyes almost staring out of their heads men ran holding on to horses' tails; *voltigeurs* flew past, the dragoons dashed by, bronze and silver sparkling in the hot whirlwind. Bent forwards, the red plumes of the Imperial army rushed along like monstrous red poppies.

The sun was darkened by the dust, the earth thundered. A trumpeter of the Italian infantry regiment, a boy black with sunburn, was the first to see the Emperor on the rampart and to shout eagerly and furiously, baring his white teeth:

"V—v—vive—Emper—rr . . . !"

The whistling roar surged round Napoleon like a thundering way. The band struck a piercing note.

Dismounting from his horse, Napoleon calmly paced up and down the Kamer-Kollezhsky wall, coughing dryly from the hot dust that blew into his dark-skinned face. In Moscow the sexton of the Ivan Veliki Cathedral rang the bell for vespers—the brass notes quivered in the air and stopped suddenly; in the gorgeous glow of the sunset the soldiers of the Emperor, in glittering armour and swaying plumes, their brass eagles sparkling in the sun, were pouring in through the city gates.

Moscow, huge and empty, lay before them in the rosy light of the evening. The warm glow was reflected in the gilded domes of the churches and on the columns that seemed to soar in the still and transparent air. Flocks of pigeons, circling over the Moscow churches and crosses, flew in a slanting line into the melting sky.

Italian infantry ran with small steps along the Arbat while the Polish Uhlans galloped by the fences. A few scattered shots were fired in the Kremlin. The Troitsky gate was barricaded with beams and a cannon was placed outside.

The gates were broken in. The King of Naples' cavalry entered the Kremlin with music.

The Polish Uhlans drove barefooted peasants dressed in homespun linen, young boys, and police soldiers, to the Red Wall; they were armed. One peasant had his beard singed and his right cheek was black with powder; his left cheek looked grey and his eyes glistened terribly.

The drunken house-serf who had scared the pigeons that morning was also placed by the Kremlin wall to be shot—a sheaf of fire in the glow of the sunset.

His hoarse shout rose ominously in the air:

"Ru—u—ussia!"

III

Clouds of dust across the fields like wings of smoke flapping in the far distance. Slanting rays of the sun seemed to dance in a whirlwind of sand.

The breastplate of Koshelev's grenadier uniform looked like velvet with the dust. His shako was hot through and through, the brass peak was burning his forehead. Koshelev had been through several campaigns and looked older and thinner; he was tanned with sunburn. As he rose in his stirrups the white straps and the brass of the harness flashed in the sun. His bay, Theseus, was snorting and biting the foam-covered bit of the bridle. The road was a blurred chaos, quivering and groaning; crowds of shadows rolled along in the mist as though Charon himself were driving hosts of souls into the murky waters of the Styx; thousands of voices were dragging out one moaning sound: "A—a—a—ah!"

Carriage windows shot sheafs of lightning-like rays; loaded carts and chaises trailed along, the footmen swaying on the tall footboard behind like statues of grey velvet. House-serfs, with their caps in their hands, ran by the wheels. The drivers shouted distractedly, the green, coffin-shaped carts loaded with Government goods dived with a deafening

noise into the clouds of dust, and it seemed as though the soldiers in charge of them had many heads instead of one. A setter puppy, grey and white, tumbled about on the flat, shining top of a carriage.

Koshelev galloped along the roadside ditch. A line of infantry suddenly floated out of the dust. The soldiers marched in step, their bayonets sparkling in the sun.

"Brothers, have any of you heard"—Koshelev pulled up his horse—"if the Golitsyn Hospital has been moved?"

The soldiers silently dived under his horse's head. Theseus shook clots of foam on the stand-up collars and faded shakos.

Leaning on their canes the officers hopped along the ditches—Koshelev recognized them in the dust by the shadows of the tall three-cornered hats.

"Gentlemen, do you know anything about the Golitsyn Hospital?" A dusty infantry officer in a green uniform waved his hand at him.

"My dear sir, what are you about?" He wiped with a red silk handkerchief his shining bald head and the grey wisps of hair on his temples. "I haven't heard about the Golitsyn. . . . They say all the hospitals have been left to the French. It's dreadful what's going on. . . . Had Suvorov been living he would have made them smart for this re-

treat. . . . They should be branded, the rascals. . . ."

The infantry captain was swept away into the dust. Postilions in pea-coloured coats with many-tiered capes sat astride the trace horses, bobbing up and down. One of them was holding a lantern on a pole, the dusty glass of it broken. Chandeliers sparkled and clinked at the top of a big cart-load beside a spinet turned upside down; a silver cage with a parrot was tied to a bundle of carpets and striped feather-beds. The parrot's yellow feathers were ruffled, the blue claws clutched at the bars, and the bird hung, head downwards, its eyes closed. A lady's chaise surrounded by barefoot serf-girls and flat-nosed Kalmuck boys sailed along. Pressing her tear-stained face to the window, the lady kept looking at the dark-haired officer on a bay horse threading his way to Moscow against the stream.

Koshelev knew that his brother Pavlusha was in the Moscow Golitsyn Hospital; he had been told this by the doctor of the Grenadier Regiment—a young German who had recently been to Moscow with the hospital carriages.

Koshelev had last seen his brother in the summer on the road to Smolensk. He remembered it was a day of rain and sunshine, and the carts carrying the wounded had blocked the grenadiers' way.

The peasants and the soldiers were shouting, and the wounded swearing or moaning. Koshelev jumped off his horse and walked beside the carts.

"Brother!" Pavlusha's voice had called him from a cart. His brother, pale and thin, was trying to sit up on the hay, wincing with pain. His coat had slipped off his shoulders. His blue hussar cloak had dark stains on it, the gold braiding was torn, and the white fur trimming hung in brown wisps.

Koshelev bent down to him and turned pale with the smell of the soiled lint.

"Good heavens, Pavlusha! . . . You're wounded! Is it very bad?"

The boy frowned and whispered, turning away: "I'm wounded in the stomach."

"Good God, in the stomach! . . . I told you not to go into the army. There would have been plenty of time for that, and you wouldn't listen to me. . . . Where were you wounded?—when?"

"At Smolensk, sir—they were all wounded in the battle at Smolensk," a fair-haired sturdy peasant answered readily, speaking for Pavlusha. The drivers with their caps in their hands crowded round the cart, listening to the dark-haired gentleman reproaching the youngster.

Bony soldiers in blood-stained bandages rose from the carts like Lazarus in his winding sheet. A ser-

geant whose bandaged head was crowned with a shako stood up and shook his fist:

"Move on!"

Pyotr Koshelev turned out of his leather bag with the brass grenades at the corners all there was in it on to the hay in his brother's cart: a purse with gold, a crumpled towel, a pistol ramrod, a silver watch, a leather-bound volume of Voltaire, and a piece of raisin bread he had bought from the Jews.

"Where are you taking him?" Koshelev looked intently at the peasants with his greenish eyes.

"To Moscow, of course," the drivers answered one after the other.

"Listen, if you don't look after my brother, I'll——"

"Don't, brother . . . I am quite happy . . . " Pavlusha winced and raised his transparent hand.

Pyotr covered him up with his coat. The boy's chin trembled.

"Don't be angry, brother. . . . I am quite happy. . . . They are kind. They give me kvass to drink. That one with the fair beard calls me his little neighbour. . . ."

Pyotr had not seen his brother since that meeting on the road to Smolensk. . . .

"It's dreadful what's going on there," Koshelev recalled the infantry captain's words, and thought, "Surely they can't have left Pavlusha in Moscow?"

From the hazel-wood on the hillside he caught once more a glimpse of the road to Moscow.

A crowd was moving down below: bearded men in blue coats looking like merchants or shop assistants, peasant women and children, priests in velvet caps, artisans with shaven heads who looked like convicts. All were huddled together under a heavy ikon stand.

The brocaded vestments glowed like fire, the coloured ribbons of the ikons flapped in the sultry wind, the posts supporting the ikon-stand made a scraping sound as though the men carrying them had shoulders of iron.

Koshelev listened to the clanking of copper braziers and the muffled outbursts of singing. A tall priest in narrow vestments, as though in shining armour, was walking in front. Sunshine streamed on the crowd, lighting up the heads and making the beards look like metal. Koshelev gazed in surprise at the bronze procession, not knowing that he, too, looked like a shining horseman of bronze on the top of the hill.

After a while Theseus' hoofs struck the wooden pavement with a dull thud. The farther Koshelev rode into the empty streets, the sadder and more harmonious grew the sounds of the retreat, like some beautiful music dying down.

The Old Believers' white one-storeyed houses

with iron roofs and gloomy waste places stretched along the road. A broken lantern hung down from a striped post at a corner. The gates of an inn were wide open. An old man in a white shirt and velveteen waistcoat was walking about the yard looking for something among the heaps of smashed glass. The old man's cheek and hands were bleeding. The soldiers must have broken into the pot-house, and now the owner was walking about the yard. The streets were deserted. A cannon boomed in the far distance. Koshelev held back his horse till the sound died down. He listened, entranced, to the harmonious hum of the far-away crowds that was like music.

Blue Don Cossacks galloped up from a side street. They were bending low over their saddles and their red lances swayed close to the stirrups. A young Cossack with a puffy face sharply reined in his horse.

"Where are you going, your honour? Don't you know the French are in Moscow?"

"Surely not?"

"It's the truth!" The Cossack blew his nose noisily. "Turn back . . . the whole lot of them are in the city."

There was a sudden flash; Theseus jumped, and Koshelev lost his stirrup.

When he found it again the Cossacks had gone, and, from the other end of the empty streets, sol-

diers in ill-fitting blue and red uniforms were slowly coming up in open, skirmishing formation, holding their muskets at the ready.

Theseus kicked and would go no farther; Koshelev was still fumbling for his pistol when he was surrounded by the French.

A swarthy sergeant with drooping moustaches put his bayonet against the horse's foam-covered chest. Theseus calmed down instantly, as though this was the very thing he had been waiting for. Snorting and sneezing, he tossed his head as though greeting the French.

Another soldier, also swarthy, with a torn red epaulette, wrenched the pistol from Koshelev. The sergeant said something peremptory and gave Koshelev his hand.

Koshelev jumped down. Breathing heavily, he stood among the blue soldiers; the wind stirred his sweat-damp hair. The soldier with the torn epaulette hit Theseus on the crupper with the butt-end of his musket. The horse started and galloped away, the empty stirrups ringing as it ran. The soldiers laughed.

"I've lost my shako," Koshelev thought. "I'm a prisoner."

The soldiers followed the Russian officer in a body, talking quietly. The sergeant held him by the elbow.

A regiment had halted in the street; the soldiers had piled arms and sat leaning against the fence. Koshelev had to step over their dusty legs.

It was the Spanish battalion, which had been sent to the city gates. The sergeant led Koshelev by the sleeve to a stout colonel in a green uniform. The grey-headed Spaniard was sitting on a drum in the middle of the street. The brass buttons of his waistcoat were undone at the bottom; he was chewing something, and his puffy, bristly cheeks were moving lazily.

The Spaniard nodded to Koshelev and buttoned his waistcoat. A ring glittered on one of his short fingers.

It was night when they led Koshelev along the streets of Moscow; he recognised the Kremlin wall, that looked like a huge perpendicular shadow in the greenish desert of the sky.

There was a quiet, leisurely hum of voices in the Red Square. It was as though the Square, and the Kremlin, lit up as on Easter night, and the whole of Moscow, and the warm September sky, were buzzing sweetly and drowsily.

The sound of rustling hay came from the horses that stood by a church wall in the Kremlin. One of them turned its eye on Koshelev as he passed.

The sergeant brought him up to a grenadier in a bearskin helmet with white tassels. The grenadier

shifted his musket, said something politely and quietly, and pushed open an iron door in the wall.

IV

At daybreak the sky was covered with transparent grey clouds. The Exchange was on fire and a pillar of black smoke swayed over it.

In the morning the chasseurs collected the Russian prisoners and drove them towards the Spassky gate. There were some six or seven hundred of them. There were among them fair-haired recruits with childish, wide eyes—deserters from various regiments—their blistered feet wrapped up in rags; peasants with brass crosses on their woollen coats, who had just been called up for the army; and police officers with badges on their helmets. There were drunken men among them, and these needed no driving to the Spassky gate.

Two squadrons of Guards appeared from behind a stone wall overshadowed by dusty birches. In the cloud of dust behind them, the Emperor, hardly touching the bridle, galloped on a silver-grey Arab mare that neighed excitedly, dilating its reddish nostrils. He was wearing a grey coat and a small black three-cornered hat with a cockade of red, white, and blue, and his face had the slight pallor that follows an uncomfortable night. His mar-

shals came close behind him, their horses prancing easily.

The artillery stretched along the empty Arbat going towards the Kremlin. The street reverberated with the roar of the traffic; the artillerymen had been warned not to delay the Emperor and so drove at full speed.

Between the heavy wheels the emblems and signs of all the states and nations swept by at the cannons' mouths: the Austrian eagles with folded wings, the Polish crosses and eagles, the arms of Louis XVI that looked like two gorgeous ikons adorned with lilies, the initials of Frederick of Prussia, the initials of Napoleon in a wreath of laurels, the arms of the Revolution on the guns of the Convention—brass arrows over a scintillating star. The drivers, dazed with the roar and the glitter, tore off their shakos as they disappeared with their guns into the dust, shouting:

"V—vv—i—i—i—ve! . . ."

The Emperor impatiently flicked his silver-grey Arab on its moist neck. The artillery had thundered past, and the empty Arbat grew still more mysterious and desolate, as the hoofs of the marshals' horses clattered ominously on the wooden planks.

At the Borovitsky gate Napoleon leapt from the saddle, showing for an instant the whole of his thick legs in blue trousers. Pulling off his snow-white glove, moist with perspiration at the finger-tips, he

waved it and said something humorous in his husky voice. A murmur of approval ran through the brilliant cortège.

While Napoleon was admiring the Kremlin walls, Field-Marshal Kutuzov, coughing and rubbing his fat, hairy chest, was telling his orderlies to heat a bath-house for him—a humble bath-house without a chimney, belonging to a peasant's cottage in the village where the headquarters of the army were at the moment.

In the evening his orderlies, supporting him by the arms, led him to the bath-house, and it was night when they led him out, hot and exhausted, into the dark birch-grove outside. A warm wind was blowing, and the branches rustled noisily.

Men looked like thin shadows on the hillside where the birches showed dark against a red sky.

The Commander-in-Chief was led to the top of the hill. He could not recognise his officers and generals in the red glow: their faces seemed red-hot, with terrible black holes for eyes.

Far away in the dark sky, flames rose and fell in a low, wave-like line.

Someone moved aside and said:

"Moscow . . . Good God, Moscow is burning!"

V

In the Kremlin Church of the Transfiguration, into which the French grenadier had pushed Koshelev, the gold of the woodwork gleamed a dull red.

The Byzantine shoes of Saints Gurius, Samon, and Aviv in a mural painting were still visible, while the faces of the saints disappeared in the dusk.

Koshelev looked at the red Greek boots, with their turned-up toes, and at a long brown hand holding a golden chalice, and he fancied that the church candelabra with its trembling crystals, and the woodwork lighter by the last rays of the setting sun, and the saints, invisible in the gathering darkness, were all listening breathlessly to the murmur of the city and the sounds of the French signals.

The box on which Koshelev was sitting was covered with the French soldiers' cloaks of coarse cloth that smelt of smoke and horses.

He picked up one of the cloaks gingerly. His epaulette was torn; he pulled it off and threw it under the box; he did not care.

Koshelev, who was meticulously neat and loved fine linen and a rub down with a hard brush in the morning, particularly resented the fact that he had not washed, that his feet were numbed in his tight boots, and that his uniform smelt of other people's tobacco and horses.

The square of night sky that could be seen through the grill of the church window had turned red, and it seemed to Koshelev that the sky was breathing.

Shadows of the grill fell upon the stone slabs, and the church was filled with a reddish mist. High up on the wall the brass crown of an ikon glittered in the dark. Koshelev realised that the sounds he heard were not signals but the noise of the fire.

He wandered about the church, stumbling against cloaks and saddles; the church had been taken over as a depot for Murat's cavalry, which had already been moved out of Moscow and was galloping along the Vladimir road, towards Asia.

Koshelev's cloak caught the censer as he opened a partition door adorned with a picture of an Archangel in silver armour carrying a white lily. The Archangel's face was lit up with a red glow. In the altar recess Koshelev crossed himself hurriedly, as one does in a thunder-storm, gazing at the seven-branched candelabra.

Behind the altar there was a door leading to the vestry or the belfry. It opened on to a stuffy, narrow, windowless passage, with a door on to the stairs at the end of it. The wooden steps creaked under Koshelev's feet. His elbows touched the walls and he was hardly able to squeeze himself through. It all felt like a dream, and the hissing noise of the fire

attracted him as the moonlight attracts a sleep-walker.

A cool wind stirred his hair. There was a narrow window in the rough wall overlooking the Senate Square, littered with papers; by the glow of the fire he saw a stack of logs piled under the window.

Guns had been taken out of the Arsenal; French artillerymen sat and walked about among them. Boxes of ammunition were piled in the yard, and threw slanting shadows over the red sand. A sentry in a bearskin helmet walked past the stack of logs. Koshelev put his foot out of the window, trying to find a foothold on the logs; then he jumped out noiselessly and lay flat, with his face against the logs. The birchbark had a damp, pleasant smell. He listened to the sentry's receding steps, and crept on, then jumped off the stack into the shadow cast by a cartridge-box.

Bending low, and wrapping his French cloak around him, he ran along the black squares. His shadow flitted over the reddish sand. The row of ammunition-boxes seemed endless. And Koshelev thought, "It's all a dream . . . "

He ran alongside the boxes till he reached the gate. French soldiers were standing there. Most of them had their arms crossed and were gazing at the glowing sky, talking quietly. Their faces looked ex-

traordinarily beautiful in the red light. No one turned round when Koshelev mixed with the crowd. He made his way through the gate and walked in the direction of the Vassili Blazhenny. He broke into a run, his steps echoing against the stone slabs in the empty street.

The outline of some fine mansion stood out against the sky. Koshelev ran alongside the colonnade, breathing in the warm wind. The window-panes on the opposite side glittered as though they had come to life and turned towards the glow. A sentry paced up and down with a measured tread by a low building with a black eagle over the gates. Koshelev knew him for a Frenchman by his shako and by the way he held his musket, muzzle downwards. The sentry shouted something derisive. Koshelev turned a corner and the heat caught him in the face.

A crowd swayed to and fro in a narrow square, making inarticulate noises. Koshelev was pushed into a dark passage. He saw bales of cloth being unrolled and rapidly passed from hand to hand. Breathless with the smoke, he fought hard to get out of the crowd. A wooden partition came down with a roaring noise, and a sea of fire showed behind it. The crowd rushed away, pushing and struggling. Boxes of goods crunched underfoot. Koshelev caught hold of a big jar on the counter.

The heat drove the crowd into the square. A line of soldiers in blue seemed to be dancing right up by the flames.

There was a volley of shots, and Koshelev, together with the crowd, fled from the smoke and glitter of muskets. It all flashed by like a swift dream. He ran along a sloping street, with a cool, flickering sky above him. The scene in the Square might have been unreal, but that his hands were burned and sore. He thought they were bleeding. "I must have cut my hands in the fire," Koshelev said and licked his palm as he ran. It tasted sweet and had a flavour of cherries: he must have broken a jam-jar in that shop.

He heard footsteps behind him and turned round. A bony, bearded peasant in a soldier's cap was carrying a bundle of cloth; a second man, with a shaven head, wearing a loose hempen coat, ran beside him, breathing shortly and hoarsely like a dog.

Koshelev stood still. The long man took off his cap, and bowing obsequiously, hedged past him, smiling and muttering:

"*Mossoo, mossoo* . . ."

The other man, short and with sunken cheeks, looking like an inmate of a lunatic asylum, pushed his comrade in the back:

"Get along . . . you see the infidel is a bit dazed —he won't touch us."

"I am no infidel, I am Russian," said Koshelev, making way for them.

"You don't say so!" the bony peasant brought out in surprise, shifting his bundle from one arm to the other and covering his head. "You look a regular Frenchman."

"Where do you belong?" the man in the loose gown asked quickly.

"I am on my own; I am an officer."

"Officer!" the bearded man repeated in surprise. "Why are you hanging about here then? Officer, indeed! A deserter, I expect."

"Of course he's an officer—don't you see? He's a gentleman—one can tell that at a glance," his companion interrupted.

Koshelev noticed that he wore slippers on his bare feet.

"But, your honour, why have you stayed behind in Moscow?"

"I was taken prisoner, but I've escaped. That's why I am here. I don't know where to go. . . ."

"So you are all on your own?" said the long peasant, with a grin.

"Come along with us. . . . Moscow is in our charge to-day—we'll take care of it. . . . Everyone in Moscow to-day is on his own: the gentry have fled and left room for us. It's freedom, one may say."

They both laughed. Their dry laugh offended and somehow grieved Koshelev.

"And who are you?" he asked, walking between them.

"We?" the long man grinned and made no answer, but the fellow in the loose coat spoke readily:

"If you want the truth, we are convicts, your honour. He is Filka, the thief, and I've been sentenced for false coinage. I should have been flogged, but His Excellency the Count, bless him, let us out just as the French came up. It's clear enough what we are."

They both laughed again.

"No, it's a dream," thought Koshelev miserably.

A detachment of French dragoons rode past them, swaying on their tall horses. Wrapped in their cloaks, the dragoons were probably dozing. A far-off glow was dying down in the sky.

"This way, your honour—through the gate." The bony man pushed Koshelev in the back with the flat of his hand. Broken glass glittered among the nettles in an empty yard.

"Go in; there are some steps there—don't stumble."

Koshelev fumbled his way down a steep staircase into a basement. A door with a brick pulley opened slowly; there was a din of voices and a smell of vodka within.

Wax candles were fixed to the log walls, and the huge cellar—or it might have been a bath-house—seemed a stuffy sepulchral vault full of lights. Koshelev saw a number of men, some of whom looked like gypsies, with dishevelled beards and coarse hair.

"We've brought a gentleman," the bony peasant shouted. "Honour bright, an officer."

"They've brought an officer."

"What is your regiment, your honour?"

"Don't worry him. . . . This way, sir."

Koshelev sat down on the damp straw. A soldier with bristly cheeks—Koshelev noticed that he wore a policeman's badge on his uniform—carefully shoved some straw under Koshelev's feet.

"Put your feet down here, your honour; we'll put some straw there.

"The mob," Koshelev thought, with fear and fastidious disgust. He lay down with his face in the straw, and suddenly remembered how one night in Petersburg he had listened at night to confused and sinister voices behind a wooden partition. Now the partition had broken down, and here he was in the cellar with the mob, with Filka the convict, on the straw. He shut his eyes tightly, and before long the hum of the conversation sounded to him like a mournful dirge.

He woke up in cold darkness. The cellar was filled with loud snoring and sleepy moans. He woke

up because someone was fumbling round his neck, unfastening the cord of his turquoise locket.

A fair-haired man in a blue coat with white buttons was crouching beside him, looking at him attentively.

"What do you want, sir? What are you trying to find?"

Koshelev thought that this fat man in the blue coat was a gentleman.

"Your passport or any regimental document," the fair man murmured insinuatingly. "And you had better take off your uniform, sir; the French will recognise it soon enough. . . . Take this sheepskin, sir—it's true it's torn and shabby, but anyway it will be a disguise."

The man in the blue coat helped Koshelev to take off his coat. It was unpleasant to feel the touch of his big warm hands.

"Do you know what sort of place this is?"

Koshelev winced as he put on the rough sheepskin garment.

"It's a pot-house. . . . But you need not treat me as your equal. I am a serf, an under butler of His Excellency Prince Shcherbatov's. My name is Larka. The gentry have all gone out of the city, and we have been left behind. . . . If you want anything, just call me—Larka!"

"Thank you."

"Here, you see, my sheepskin has come in useful. May I have your passport, please, sir?"

"I haven't one."

"That settles it, then."

Larka took the uniform and moved away.

Koshelev disliked this obsequious man, with a voice like a woman's. He disliked his breath that reeked of vodka, his heavy breathing while he helped him off with the coat, and, above all, Koshelev was annoyed at having mistaken Larka for a gentleman.

Koshelev did not want to stir a finger. The incredible Moscow dream was gaining possession of him.

VI

If someone had told him in Petersburg, at the hour of noon when the booming gun was fired at the fortress and its smoke flew over the clear Neva like a ruddy cloud, or at the Kamennoy Ostrov, where he loved to sit by the water-side in a little acacia arbour, or when he stood by the Neva while the wind played with his white cockade and with the flags by the dam, and the brass helmet of Pallas Athene glistened on the cupola of the Academy of Arts on the other side of the river—if someone had told him, but a short time ago, that he would see the sky over Moscow red with the glow of fire, that he would mix

with the mob and lie in a sheepskin on stinking straw with convicts—he would have refused to believe that such was his fate.

The grand and magnificent words to which he was accustomed—"the sons of Russia," "the Northern heroes," "the descendants of the ancient Slavs fighting for the land of their fathers"—seemed in that underground den as false and unreal as the vision of Pallas Athene glistening beyond the Neva.

What was real in this place was the police soldier with bristly cheeks, the fair-haired serf in the blue coat who had searched him in the night, the bony thief, Filka—in short, the mob with which Chance had thrown him together.

He had always looked down upon the lower classes—dirty people that stank of vodka, fish, and garlic. It was true, he had a genuine affection for his soldiers, and yet with them, too, he was only coldly polite. But the masses that thronged somewhere down below, under the portals of the Empire, the primitive, ignorant, uncultured people with bushy beards right up to their eyes, with a revolting habit of bowing to the ground—merchants waddling like fat blue geese, priests with long greasy hair who looked like bearded women, the sour smells and stuffiness of the poor houses, the dusty desert of the provinces—this unendurably dull and depressing Russia, gaudy and absurd, heavy and violent—roused in him feelings of

hostility, fear, and disgust. He ardently desired her freedom, culture, civic rights—he hardly knew himself what he did wish—that she might grow light, tall, and graceful like the colonnades beyond the Neva, like the beautiful glittering goddess on that lofty dome.

The golden-breasted Athene was his country, she was his Russia—and she had her colonnades and porticoes, her soldiers in eagle-stamped helmets. But the other, the stinking, deaf-and-dumb Russia, seething in the depths with a kind of dull murmur, was strange and hostile to him—and, indeed, was it Russia at all?

Koshelev smiled contemptuously and all at once flushed crimson; he felt it as a sickening insult that he had crushed a louse on his neck. The chamois-leather bag with the locket had gone; that stout Russian Achilles in the blue coat must have cut it off. . . .

The cellar was empty but for a big soldier who sat leaning his head on his yellowish hand by a window through which a dusty sheaf of sunlight poured into the room. "A deserter," Koshelev thought, with contemptuous indifference.

The soldier rumpled the straw and said, stammering slightly:

"Good morning, sir."

"Good morning."

The soldier's coarse, dusty whiskers, his thin hair combed back over his bald head, his gently shining eyes with bags under them, and especially the three lines across his forehead, seemed familiar to Koshelev.

"Wait a minute, brother. . . . What is your regiment?"

"Grenadier Guards—same as yours. You d-didn't recognise me, but I knew you at once; you are in the s-sixth company of the s-second battalion, and I am in the third company of the f-first—Rodion Koshevok, deserter."

"Oh, yes, I remember you."

Koshelev did vaguely remember something about an old soldier who had run away and was afterwards punished before the paraded regiment. He recalled Borodino, when the grenadiers stood in closed ranks under fire, and one heard the moans of the wounded and the death-rattle of the dying. On the right flank they kept driving away a white dog that dashed along the ranks with its ears thrown back, and jumped into the air at each sound of the cannon. It had evidently lost its master, and as it ran it sniffed the soldiers' boots. One soldier—it was this old man, Koshelev believed—bent down and patted it on the head, and the dog pressed itself to his musket.

"Of course I know you. . . . You had a dog, hadn't you?"

"That's right, sir."

The soldier put his hand into the straw.

A heavy white dog with matted hair got up, dragging its hind paw, and thrust its head into the soldier's palm. The paw was bandaged with a rag brown with blood.

"That's the one," the grenadier said. "It wouldn't have m-mattered about my chest being bad—I have lost all my strength—ill or not, I would have gone through Moscow with my regiment, but the dog had its paw run over by a cartwheel on the bridge. Then I left the ranks. S-so it s-seems I'm a deserter again. . . ."

The soldier took out from the breast of his coat a broken wooden comb, and began combing out the dog's fleas. It stood still, thrusting its head between his sharp knees. The soldier kept holding the comb up to the light and pulling out knots of dirty hair.

"So that's how we have met . . ." said Koshelev, watching the grenadier's hands. "What will happen now?"

"What will happen? Why, we are done for," the grenadier answered calmly, examining the comb. "The enemy will march on Petersburg next. It's all up with Russia."

"Come, come!"

"I know what I'm saying . . . Russia is a doomed country. It was foretold ages ago."

"How do you mean?"

"It's clear enough. . . . But you won't believe it—you are a gentleman."

The dog yelped.

"Well, so be it," said Koshelev, smiling. "You'd better tell me, Uncle, where the people who slept here have gone to, and how I am to get out of here?"

"Oh, those men! They are c-convicts. They've gone to set f-fire to the place."

"I don't understand—set fire to what?"

"Why, to everything—houses, shops, b-buildings, to all there is—the whole of Moscow, so that n-nothing but ashes is left of it."

"You're raving!"

"N-no, sir, I am not lying"—the soldier had not caught what Koshelev said—"I know they've gone to set fire to the city."

He looked at Koshelev fixedly and sternly from under his brows:

"I recognise you perfectly now: you are C-captain Koshelev of the s-second battalion."

The dog got up, rustling the straw.

"Where are you off to? Keep still!" the soldier cried sternly, driving the dog away from Koshelev.

"Why do you drive it away?"

"Because I do. It has no business to fawn on the gentry. . . . S-since your honour thought of going, you had better go. What do you want with

those wretched convicts? . . . Take my word for it—go."

VII

Koshelev emerged into the yard. Dusty birch-trees rustled in the wind; the nettles by the fence had a dull sheen on them.

A wide expanse of the sky could be seen from the street. A dark cloud was moving fast along the horizon; a warm gusty wind was blowing, and the dusty leaves looked like gun-metal.

Koshelev thought that the black cloud meant fire and not a storm, and that, like Herostratus, convicts and serfs armed with torches were setting fire to Moscow. It seemed to him such incredible madness and villainy that he said aloud in his anger:

"It's a storm, not a fire."

He walked in the middle of the road, raising the dust. The black cloud on the horizon began to glow with inward heat. Then Koshelev understood it was the beginning of the fire; no one had expected it and no one could stop it now—it was a force against which he, and Bonaparte, and Alexander, and Russia, and the whole world, and this red-hot sky, and the murmuring birches were equally powerless.

Fate had left him in burning Moscow, and he

would submit to fate. He would find his brother Pavlusha and their Moscow house. Anything might happen now; it was all beyond his control.

As he walked along he passed dusty carriages by the gates of the low-pitched houses.

Unharnessed horses munched hay that had been heaped up close to the wheels. A Frenchman in a leather jacket and a red cloth cap tilted to one side sat in one of the carriages, with his back to the horses. He was eating something off a piece of paper spread on his lap.

Two soldiers in red caps were hacking a carcass of beef.

An officer in a brown, white-breasted uniform was asleep in a carriage in the middle of the road. His feet, in rusty-looking riding-boots, rested on the seat, and his face was covered with a handkerchief that rose and fell lightly with his breath.

Three soldiers in blue overcoats were nailing a board to a church wall. The iron doors were open, and Koshelev noticed that bay horses with their backs to the street stood inside the church, swinging their tails. Beside the horses, Frenchmen were sleeping on striped blankets spread on hay, and one of them in his sleep put an arm on his comrade's back.

At the end of the road the sky was getting hot, and yellowish flames flickered in the darkened air. In the distance Uhlans in their patent-leather caps

with yellow braid could be seen hastily leading their horses out of the gates and bundling the yellow saddles on to them.

An Uhlan in big riding-boots ran up to a peasant who was walking in front of Koshelev—a seedy-looking man in an artisan's greasy coat, his hair tied with a string; he turned round and laughed. The Uhlan hit him in the face with the flat of his sword; the man threw up his hands. Another Uhlan ran up, while a third one stood laughing in the gateway, showing his white teeth.

Koshelev heard the artisan's screams and the dull thud of the blows, and ran, without looking back.

He came to a square thronged with people.

Koshelev stood on tiptoe, looking over people's heads and leaning against their backs and shoulders while others leaned on him.

The crowd murmured, pressing against the soldiers, who formed a chain in front, raising and lowering their bayonets.

A French general on a big horse galloped past the soldiers. The brocade collar was unbuttoned on his plump neck, he kept wiping his purplish face with a white glove and hoarsely shouting orders. The golden embroidery on his velvet cuff reflected the glow, and the blackened plumes of his hat were shrivelling in the hot wind. Flakes of soot flew over the general.

A drawn-out moan like the sound of a vibrating chord came from behind the soldiers. Shadows flitted in the fire, something crumpled fell out of a fiery window, and a black mass could be seen moving behind it.

"Men . . . " Koshelev said, with a shudder.

"There's no stopping it now," a peasant said, angrily shaking Koshelev's hand off his shoulder. "The Golitsyn Hospital is done for. . . ."

The flames moved across the square, pursuing the houses, the soldiers, the general—and they all ran.

In the street that Koshelev had just passed, the Uhlans were manhandling the carriage. A soldier threw a sack over his horse's head and turned round to look at the fire. The Frenchman in the red cap, a general's servant, was driving some peasants towards the carriage, brandishing a curved sword. The officer in the brown, white-breasted uniform, who had slept with his face covered by a handkerchief, was now sitting up in the carriage, looking fearfully at the end of the street. These two soldiers dragged the carcass of beef along the street, leaving a trail of blood in the dust.

The general with his suite galloped past. A cloud of ashes flew over the riders. Koshelev ran into a deserted side street where the dusty ruts were overgrown with grass. The window-panes of the low-pitched houses were of dull red, and a lantern glass

gleamed purplish in the distance. A detachment of Neapolitan soldiers was marching in quick time up the hill towards Koshelev, waving their arms to a measure. They all turned their swarthy faces towards the young Moscow peasant in a barbarian sheepskin.

Koshelev sat down in the empty ditch. Maples rustled solemnly above the fence, breathing out heat.

"Wait a bit, Pyotr," Koshelev said to himself. "Wait, look round Moscow—the fire, the enemy. . . . Here's a quiet street. . . . I must rest and then go on. . . ."

The murmur of the maples and the sound of his own voice calmed him.

"Why do I imagine that Pavlusha is in that hospital? He is in our house if he hasn't been moved. I must go and find the house. Oh, my God, the God of righteousness, strengthen me! Lord God of Hosts, I believe in Thee." He crossed himself and stepped out of the ditch.

A street he did not know brought him to the top of a hill, and once more he saw the dark, smoky sky over the blurred amphitheatre of the city. Reddish pillars of smoke rose in many places, and the domes of the churches flashed like pieces of red copper.

A barefooted man in hempen drawers stood at the top of the hill, his hands behind his back. Koshelev looked at his heavy hands with swollen veins and big

nails covered with black varnish. The man had a broad, powerful back. The hot wind was blowing out his shirt and fluttering his reddish beard and hair, cropped like a peasant's. The back of his neck was marked with deep, slanting lines.

"Fifty-two, fifty-three . . . sixty," the man was counting aloud and moving his fingers behind his back.

"Seventy," Koshelev said irritably, understanding that the man was counting the pillars of smoke.

"Now you've mixed me up." The man turned to Koshelev a broad face with high cheek-bones and a flat nose that had probably been broken. It was like a lion's head. He screwed up his yellowish-green eyes. The hot wind blew his beard into his face.

"You are mistaken, sir. It's over a hundred."

"Why do you call me *sir*?"

"I can see from your face and walk you are a gentleman."

The smell of the man came to Koshelev on the wind—a smell of perspiration and of something like incense—and he said morosely:

"I see you are good at guessing. And who are you—a serf?"

"Wrong again, sir." The man smiled, showing short, stumpy teeth. "I am a free artisan, coach-maker Yevstigney."

"I've never heard your name. . . . I don't belong here; I am from Petersburg."

"I thought so," the coachmaker nodded. "Look at the smoke, sir. . . . It began with the Coach Arcade. Their officers and all those foreign generals were putting chalk marks on the carriages in the Petrovka, and trying if the seats were comfortable, if the mirrors and lacquered doors were fixed properly . . . "

His leonine nostrils dilated; Yevstigney drew a deep breath and glanced with dark rage at Koshelev:

"But all the carriages have frizzled away—not a nail of them left."

And suddenly he laughed good-humoredly.

"Perhaps you set fire to them yourself?" Koshelev looked at him with hatred. "Perhaps you set fire to the Golitsyn Hospital, with our wounded in it, too? Cruel beasts that you are. . . ."

"What next, sir?" the coachmaker shook his head reproachfully. "I didn't set fire to anything, and even if someone did, do you suppose they could have burned down a huge place like that? Moscow is burning of itself. It's from God."

"From God . . ." Koshelev clenched his fists. "My brother is in the hospital, he may be burned alive; and you talk of God. . . . Don't say anything about God."

"Of course it's from God." The coachmaker

turned his lion-like face to Koshelev. "Of course it is—it's you who must say nothing about Him, not I. Your brother, and you and I, and all that lives —all those generals, powers, emperors, and the white-stoned Moscow—for God it's all simply this."

He gave a sharp wave of his arm as though cutting off something. "He will burn everything to ashes, burn us all, set fire to all Russia, because we've allowed the villain, the Antichrist Bonaparte, to come in. . . ."

He wiped his forehead with his sleeve, and suddenly added gently:

"You're murmuring against God, sir."

And all at once this strong man's lion-like face seemed poignantly familiar and charming to Koshelev.

"I am not murmuring . . . "

The hot wind carried his words away.

"I am not murmuring," Koshelev shouted through the wind. "But I have a brother. . . . It's because of him I am in Moscow. . . . God wouldn't allow such a thing—that he should be burned in the hospital."

"Are you going to try and find your brother?" the coachmaker shouted through the hot gusts of wind.

"Yes."

"Let's go together. I've jumped out of the fire

with nothing but my drawers on, and it's all the same to me now—I might be a bird flying over Moscow . . . "

"Come on . . . "

There was a clank of iron and a whirlwind of reddish dust.

VIII

The Emperor woke up as usual, as though from a sudden push.

He sat down on the camp-bed that had been placed for him in the Kremlin Palace, and rapidly rubbed himself under the arms to get warm. He was wearing cream-coloured drawers that fitted tightly over his well-rounded legs, and a long silk nightshirt of the same material.

The Emperor disliked the damp, musty smell of the green velvet furniture. There was twilight in the room; squares of flickering reddish light were reflected on the parquet floor—the monstrous Moscow sun.

Mameluke Roustand saluted him, stepping out of the darkness with a green uniform thrown over his arm and English boots in his hand. Doctor Metivier was standing by the window—the Emperor knew him by his round shoulders.

"What news?" Napoleon asked cheerfully.

Roustand knelt down to put on his stockings, and the Emperor felt with pleasure the confident pressure of the Mameluke's hot, narrow palm on his foot.

"There's a fire," the doctor said in a curiously low voice, looking fixedly at the window. "A fire," he repeated, throwing up his hands.

This sad, helpless gesture disturbed the Emperor. He began to hurry, and he breathed heavily. The Mameluke, feeling his agitation just as a horse feels its rider's, began trying in his haste to put the left boot on Napoleon's right foot. The Emperor gave him a push and Roustand corrected his mistake.

The Emperor walked to the window, straightening the white waistcoat he wore under his uniform. His eyes grew round. He had a short neck, and his head seemed too big for his heavy body. His olive-skinned face, heavy after sleep, with the black hair still uncombed and sticking out in two sharp points at the temples, was lit up by the double light of the fire and the sun.

Moscow seemed wreathed in fiery clouds and reddish mist. Tongues of flame moved along the horizon like a living wall. The other side of the river was like a sea of fire.

The Emperor walked through the Palace rooms with bent head. His face looked as though it were made of copper.

He ruffled his hair, leaned his small palm on the window-pane, and drew it back, wincing: the glass was burning hot, and cracked.

"Scythians!" he muttered.

Thrusting his hand inside his white waistcoat he turned to go back to his room almost at a run, and his steps resounded on the parquet floor.

Only the night before he had been writing to Alexander in that very room. An officer of the Russian staff, a prisoner-of-war, had taken the letter. He had written to Alexander on the subject of peace terms, and Alexander's answer was the fire.

"Incredible . . . Scythians!" he muttered through his teeth, breathing heavily.

A crowd of kings, princes, marshals—the Prince of Neuchâtel, the King of Naples, Prince Eugene—followed him from room to room, all lit up by the fiery glow. He might have been leading a fantastic dance.

A crowd was waiting by the heavy doors of the bedroom. In the flickering light of the fire, the men's faces seemed to move and grimace.

The Emperor went in, followed by the kings and princes. They were begging him to leave the Kremlin and Moscow for a few hours—the barbarians were setting fire to the town—the storm was helping them—the bridges were on fire—the retreat was cut off—the Kremlin was full of munitions—firebrands

were falling on the Arsenal roof—the sappers were exhausted—there was no water—Rastopchin had taken away the fire-engines and left supplies of vodka and spirits—there were incendiary bombs in the cellars, and heaps of copper coin that would be melted—mines had been laid under the Kremlin.

Napoleon wiped his face—he had not taken his hot bath that day, and his skin was covered with an oily film—and under the handkerchief his heavy, bristly cheek moved with a sudden smile. He knew that he was smiling that guilty, proud, disdainful smile at the most solemn and terrible moment of his life.

It was as though irrepressible contempt made him laugh when there was nothing to laugh at. A mocking smile flitted over his face like a flash of lightning, and he was himself afraid of his own sudden derision of all and everything, including himself.

"We are trapped," he muttered, or perhaps only seemed to mutter. The King of Naples, staring at him with his ardent eyes, slapped himself with both hands on the chest, and instead of repeating the grand theatrical words they had all been saying, like actors admiring their own art, he suddenly began to shout vulgarly and passionately, mixing up French and Italian words, while the two princes showered violent abuse and curses on the vile Rus-

sian serfs, on the Kalmuk Moscow, the Tatar Alexander, the fire, and the whole absurd campaign.

All of a sudden they stopped.

The Emperor sat in an arm-chair by the camp-bed, with one hand thrust into his waistcoat. His other hand was clenched as it rested on his knee. He was dressed in the green uniform of the Horse Guard Chasseurs, with a cross of the Legion of Honour and an iron cross on his breast.

They stopped when they saw the Emperor's face.

The Emperor's face of yellowish marble, with fixed grey eyes, dazzling and luminous, was like the face of eternity. It flitted before them in battles, above the standards and the eagles, like a banner of immortality, more beautiful than life and death. At the sight of the Emperor's face, kings, marshals, and armies stood spellbound, waiting for the moment when his human, husky voice should break through the resplendent marble, saying some simple, slightly mocking words, and they would rush to meet death itself with a tremor of joyful ecstasy.

Prince Eugene awkwardly raised his hand to his hat and stopped half-way.

The Emperor's dark-skinned hand crept along his plump knee; looking straight before him, he unclasped his fingers reluctantly, as it were, fumbling for his small three-cornered hat. He found it and gripped it tightly. Then his eyelids flickered: he

seemed to have come back from a far distance, and to have recognised the princes once more.

"An ocean of flame," said his mocking voice. "Very well, we'll leave the Kremlin."

Napoleon found his snuff-box in his waistcoat pocket, and with two fingers took a pinch of snuff. He put on his three-cornered hat.

With his hands behind his back he walked through the echoing rooms. In the reddish mist his shadow flitted darkly across the mirrors on the walls.

On the Arsenal roof the grenadiers, ranged in a line, passed buckets of water from hand to hand; without any words of command or shouts they threw, recoiled, and moved forward, approaching the fire and stepping back, as on the battlefield. The fur of their bearskins was smouldering, the brass chains were fastened under their chins.

The steeple of the Arsenal tower seemed to be flying amidst tongues of flame.

With guttural cries the grenadiers dragged somebody down from the Arsenal roof. In their smouldering bearskins that looked like shaggy beehives full of fiery bees, they mingled with the crowd coming out of the Palace.

The crowd swerved, dozens of arms pushed someone to the window. The Emperor was standing there, and they brought before him a Russian police sergeant. The grenadiers had caught him on the

Arsenal roof as he climbed out of the attic window —he was an incendiary.

The man shuddered and blinked like a mouse dragged out of the dark into a brilliant light. He was barefooted, his hands fumbled round his thin waist—he was pulling up his smouldering drawers. His small bristly head was shaking.

"His Majesty wants to know why you were setting fire to the place," someone asked in broken Russian. "Answer, *soldat,* why did you do it? You must answer."

The sergeant shifted from one foot to the other and straightened his drawers. He was the police officer who had that night in the pot-house heaped straw for Koshelev to lie on.

"I obeyed orders," he said hoarsely, blowing his nose with his fingers. The Emperor turned away in disgust.

"Incendiaries are to be shot on the spot."

The grenadiers led the man away; they were followed by the Emperor, the marshals, and the crowd. But in the next room the Emperor and his suite stopped, and the grenadiers dragged the incendiary along the floor—he seemed to flop under dozens of arms like a black, empty bag.

They threw him down on the bayonets in the yard.

The sentries at the Red Gates blew their trumpets.

The signal sounded like a gust of the fiery wind: the Emperor was coming.

A shapeless black heap lay by the steps, and a hand with the dry fingers making the sign of the Cross rose above it.

IX

The fire began during the night of Monday, September 2nd, somewhere on the Solianka by the Orphanage, and went out. Then it broke out again by the Exchange, and was carried by the wind to the Arcade. On September 3rd, a rearguard picket of Cossacks, under fire from Murat's chasseurs, set fire to the bridge across the river.

A bluish flame flickered over the Distillery Yard. A police officer named Voronenko set fire to the Mytny Yard, to Government and private barges by the Red Hill, and to the Simonov Monastery. The fire was carried across the Solianka and the Petrovka. Flames rose over the Arbat, where Police-sergeant Melnikov set fire to a theatre, and spread towards the Smolensky gate.

On the night of September 4th, the equinoctial gale blew across Moscow and, lifting the huge curtain of fire, brought it down upon the Pretchistenka, Tverskaya, and Nikitskaya, driving it into every part of the town.

The gale raged from east to north, and from north to east. Thundering gusts struck at the empty Red Square, shaking the fantastic domes of the Vassili Blazhenny that reflected the ruddy glow.

Fiery hosts swooped upon the Kremlin, and its red-hot walls seemed to float on waves of fire.

On the festival of the Burning Bush, September 4th, the gale blew the fire down every quarter of the city. The fire poured into streets, flew across alleys, encircled groups of buildings, and there was no understanding where the flames came from.

Bright pillars of fire shot up into the air alongside the river: the granaries were burning there.

The thunder of the explosion in the Artillery Park reverberated through the town. Vodka depots exploded with the noise of a gun. Burning spirit flamed up like huge greenish wings. At four o'clock in the afternoon, when the hurricane threw the fire across the river Yausa, the sky was ablaze all round.

Men, women, and children, drunken soldiers, officers, robbers, convicts, lunatics, ran about the streets.

People broke through house gates, threw books and arm-chairs out of windows, dragged out of the flame bags of sugar or cracked mirrors, and left them behind in order to dash into the fire again and again. There was fighting in the smoke; shots, curses, and prayers were drowned by the roar of the flames.

Drunken dragoons charged into the crowd; there was a crush, screams were heard, the fire suddenly blazed overhead, and the dragoons hacked right and left all that happened to be in their way—women, soldiers, horses, carriages.

The wind howled, the fire roared, the people screamed. Chained dogs rattled their chains and choked with smoke, struggling to wrench themselves free.

On the Tverskoy Boulevard charred bodies of the incendiaries swung on the blackened trees.

Bobrovsky, an actor of the Moscow Imperial Theatre, jumped out of a window and put up a ladder to rescue his daughter and his wife, who was with child; but a company of Westphalian infantry broke into the yard and bayoneted him.

Clerical students, sextons, clerks, who climbed up the belfries to hide from the fire, were shot down like birds: none but incendiaries were supposed to be left in Moscow.

Women were dragged through the burning gardens and the hot pavements.

Bareheaded girls crowded in the middle of a burning street. A tall old woman in a white shift stood in front of them, raising an ikon above her head. The golden setting of the ikon flashed and sparkled; the wind blew out the old woman's shift, baring her legs that were like iron girders. The girls flocked

together behind her, facing the fire and calling plaintively:

"Come out, father . . . "

A company of the Imperial Guards came marching in quick time along the burning street. In the smoke other soldiers were crossing the road, carrying pieces of velvet and silver candlesticks, as if in a fantastic funeral procession: they had been looting. It was not long before the company of Guards also scattered, disappearing, man after man, in the smoke. Blackened with the fire, their uniforms smouldering, they were soon fighting with the Polish Uhlans over the girls, the crumpled ikons, the chests of clothes. And the handsome sergeant with a fair moustache who had marched into the street with so firm a step ripped open the old woman's flat breast, wrenched the ikon out of her hands, and tore off its golden setting.

Drunken guardsmen, their faces smeared with blood and soot, were soon carrying to their headquarters in the Kremlin cases of wine, golden dishes, coachmen's coats, handfuls of diamonds and dull pearls in broken settings. They were to be seen returning from the streets as from a masquerade—in Russian shakos, in Astrakhan caps, with skirts and shawls wrapped round their necks. Old sergeants picking their way through the noisy drunken crowd would be muttering ominously:

"This sort of thing hasn't happened for years. Not since the Revolution. . . ."

The Polish Uhlans were the first to begin looting; when, near Kremlin, a French officer tried to bring a bowlegged Pole to order, the man threatened him with his sword, shouting that no one had the right to prevent the Poles from avenging Prague.

The Guards sent into the burning streets to keep order mingled with the looters. The young Guards were then expressly sent out to loot; Davout's division was the next, and the soldiers of all the sixteen nations, corps after corps, followed on.

They went into the fire trim and orderly soldiers of the Emperor who had conquered the world; they came out unruly gangs of plunderers belonging to sixteen different nations, loaded with booty, covered with women's coats and smouldering brocades, their pockets bulging with lumps of melted silver.

The Grand Army began melting in the Moscow fire.

In the Kuznetsky drunken soldiers were already fighting with their officers over the French *modistes* discovered in the empty houses of the gentry. Convicts in sheepskins, let loose by Rastopchin, runaway serfs, and deserters from the Russian army led the soldiers of the Emperor to the richest houses. The women followers of the army and the prostitutes of Moscow were the greediest and the most eager at

plunder: they rushed into the fire in a body, screaming with excitement.

But in that same Kuznetsky, by the Roman Catholic Church of St. Louis, French sappers—big, bearded men in leather aprons, armed with axes—and a battalion of the Fusilier Guards were defending the Kremlin from the fire.

The guardsmen, in blue coats and white trousers, silently moved up and down with buckets of water. A short, stout officer, his face wrapped up in a smoking scarf, was shouting words of command; the wind played with his full, handsome epaulettes.

The artillery was stationed by the Post Office and the Bank; the Bavarian infantry stood to arms in the Moroseika. Their rough faces were lit up by the flickering light of the fire; orders had been given not to let the flames approach the Kremlin or the Tchisiye Prudi on the Moroseika.

Dragging boxes and bags behind them, crowds of looters came by. The artillerymen stood up on the ammunition-boxes, whistling and swearing. But many of them jumped down and disappeared in the reddish mist. The ranks thinned. Left to themselves the horses, entangled in the harness, stretched their heads, neighing and biting one another, and sparks were reflected in their eyes.

The wind raised mountains of fire. Moscow was like the flaming tabernacle, the fiery pillar of Moses.

In the Archangel Cathedral the ikons glittered in their red-hot setting. The All-Seeing Eye and the Heaven of the Blessed were scorched with the heat.

The Son in the Glory of the Father soared in the fire-lit mist of the Uspensky Cathedral, and the golden raiment of the Saviour seemed to stir in the glow. The silver sarcophaguses of the Tchernigov saints, Prince Mihail and his boyar Feodor, were broken up by the plunderers.

The six-tiered candelabra, a mass of silver weighing hundreds of pounds, was swinging to and fro. Under their dark habits, holy bishops of old Russia, metropolitans Jonah and Peter, Photius and Cyprian, seemed to move in the uncertain light.

The oak beams of the Ivan Veliki belfry began to give way, and the huge copper bells resounded faintly.

In the palaces of the nobility mirror ceilings, caryatides, ikon-stands were falling. The house in which Suvorov was born had already perished; in the headquarters of the Moscow Freemasons the hieroglyphs on the walls and the skeletons in the black cloaks holding Egyptian staffs slowly crumpled in the fire.

The belfry of the Novospassky Monastery had fallen into the flames.

It was as though a procession of the Moscow Tsars and Tsaritsas walked across mountains of fire in

glistening robes and crowns, holding fiery spheres in their hands.

It was as though a flaming archangel waved a sword of fire over the city, dropping sheaves of lightning wreathed in smoke.

X

The Emperor and his suite were threading their way somewhere at the bottom of the fiery abyss.

Bertier and Murat were with him; both were much taller than he, so that between them he looked a dwarf.

They were leading him into the smoke where drunken soldiers were singing. He stepped over burning beams, his coat caught in some planks. The smuts made Murat cough; his bushy whiskers were singed. He took the Emperor by the arm but did not know where to go. A wall of fire was moving along each side of the street.

In Lebyazhy Street the Emperor was stopped by a strange procession. Men were running down the road one after another, some of them barefoot, others in slippers, some in white caps put on sideways, others bareheaded, wearing cloth gowns, hempen shirts, or nothing at all. They were grimacing, dancing, waving their arms, laughing and screaming.

It was a crowd of lunatics let out of the asylums at Rastopchin's orders. There were women among them, frantic and dishevelled.

A stout, bald-headed man with high cheek-bones was leading them. He picked up a cannon ball and threw it from one hand to the other, shouting delightedly:

"It burns—it burns!"

Those who ran after him repeated his ecstatic shout, laughing and screaming.

The Emperor took off his hat, and the wind stirred his coarse hair. He turned to Murat, and his face seemed made of shining bronze.

In the smoky mist some soldiers ran across the street. A dragoon in a white uniform came out of a cellar holding a bottle and a sugar loaf in blue paper; suddenly he staggered and fell: he had been struck a smashing blow on the skull with a sabre.

The dazzling head of bronze—a vision of the Emperor—appeared before the soldiers. They recognised him; some dashed away, others drew back to the cast-iron gates, buttoning their uniforms with shaking fingers.

The bronze head smiled, the Emperor said something, and two fusiliers came forward. They were drunk and had just been fighting with the Italians in the wine cellar. Napoleon told them to take him out of the fire.

They led him through side streets near the Arbat. Both soldiers had grown sober and walked with a brisk, even step. Their faces, with aquiline noses and big moustaches, looked handsome. Their nostrils dilated as they breathed, and a smell of good wine and smouldering cloth came from them.

The Arbat was cumbered with burning wreckage and bonfires of arm-chairs, cupboards, and doors, like one long flaming barricade. The Emperor's suite followed him closely, wrapped in their cloaks, their hats tied with handkerchiefs.

They were held up by a procession of military carts rumbling down the street. The soldier's strong fingers, that were touching Napoleon's sleeve, trembled as he calmly said to his companion over the Emperor's head:

"It's the ammunition train, old man."

"Be quiet," the other answered.

The Emperor took off his hat. Burning sparks fell upon his head; he picked them off his collar like stinging fiery wasps, and fanned his face with his hat, stirring the sultry air.

The Emperor waited for the powder waggons to pass—and time, life, and death waited for him. The iron wheels rattled past. The roar of the fire grew audible again, and the soldiers led the Emperor on. Life, death, and time moved again. At the end of the street a rocket battery was driving to and fro.

Men were shouting and horses neighing. They had lost their way; the soldiers huddled on the caissons covered their heads with their cloaks.

When, in the evening, they led the Emperor out of the city by the Dorogomilovsky gate, an explosion resounded through the roar of the fire: the rocket battery was blown up.

Napoleon was told that he was in the Petrovsky Palace in safety. He did not wait for candles but went by himself into the dark halls. Through a window a flickering glow could be seen in the distance.

His face and hands were sore, and his uniform smelt of smoke. He walked impetuously through the gaping darkness, and all of a sudden he shuddered: the small dark man in the huge mirror which he had mistaken for a window shuddered too.

It was the glowing depths of the mirror that made him shudder. He felt that his plump shoulders and his left calf were trembling—trembling with fear. He gave way to fear, and pressing his face to the mirror he saw another face looking out of the fire-lit darkness—a wan, deadly pale face.

A sudden thought pierced him, and everything was revealed to him in a flash; for a moment his eyes were opened.

The very elements were against him; his enemy was fire, more terrible than any revolution. The

elements were the real enemies of his work of regenerating the world.

God made him His viceroy, His image upon earth; then why did God hinder him? Why did He release the fury of fire upon him? He was with God, he was for God, he wanted to raise up to Him all the nations and peoples.

"My God!" he cried aloud, and came to himself. He smelt the burnt cloth of his uniform, the smell of his own body; he felt that his flesh was trembling. No, he was not a son of God but a son of man. Darkness was above him, and he would never overstep its boundaries, never break away from the earth and enter the world beyond.

He turned away from the mirror. God, darkness, the elements, the weary emptiness of metaphysics—as though be believed in all that foolishness! He believed in the human earth; he believed in nothing; he believed in himself. He took another step, smiling contemptuously, but his heavy face trembled. He broke into sobs, and sobbed passionately, hysterically, like a woman.

XI

In the small lobby leading out of the hall, Koshelev at once recognised the flat leather sofa, and by the door the Dutch blue-tiled stove, with lions, Cupids,

camels, and dwarfs, and an inscription dating back to the times of Peter the Great: "Cupid bridles the lion and converts the lion into a lamb."

Koshelev recognised the gloomy Moscow house, and the sense of loneliness and hostility that he always felt there possessed him once more.

His brother Pavlusha and he had grown up in this house in charge of nurses and tutors. A pock-marked German in a snuff-stained coat used to hit him on the hands with a ruler and make him kneel in front of the Cupid.

He had never known his father or seen his mother. A Moscow aristocrat, a morose and misanthropic old man, notorious for his eccentricity, adopted, just for a whim, the two orphans—the boy Peter and baby Paul—gave them his name, and left his house and money to them.

From the hall Koshelev went into a small circular room. The red-haired coachmaker, shy of going into a gentleman's house, remained in the yard.

The fire was already raging in the garden of the next house behind the fence, and the lime trees, looking like magnificent torches, rustled in the wind.

Koshelev recognised the flutes, tambourines, and ribbon-wreathed masks of Terpsichore hanging on the blue walls. A lame dancing-master in a black swallow-tail coat used to teach his brother Pavlusha

his first *contredanse* here, by the columns, to the strains of a small fiddle. The pale boy in a velvet jacket obediently raised his feet, constantly making mistakes.

Koshelev caught a reflection of himself in a mirror between the windows; he looked himself up and down. Here he was, the heir of the Koshelev house, an officer of the Imperial Guards, in a sheepskin, ragged and black with smoke.

"Pa—a—avel!" he called dully, knowing that no one would answer, that there was not a soul in all these rooms shaking with the roar of the fire next door.

He pushed open the door into the big drawing-room. Narrow streaks of fire could be seen through the cracks of the closed shutters, and a candle in a brass candlestick was burning on one of the arm-chairs.

Seeing that candle on the arm-chair alarmed Koshelev. He stepped forward and saw a dull mirror before him, but out of its dark depths someone else was coming towards him, with a pale, terrible face:

"A—ah!" Koshelev cried out.

"Pyotr Grigoryevitch!"

An old man in a black cloak carefully shifted the candle and put down on the arm-chair a cage and a rusty-looking boot which he had been hugging,

together with some books and a flute. The books fell on the floor with a dull thud.

"You don't recognise me, Pyotr Grigoryevitch," said the old man, bending over the books. "I am your steward, Naum Stepanitch Polunin."

"How you startled me, Naum Stepanitch!"

Polinin had been an assistant in Novikov's bookshop, and when the Government closed it he opened a small bookstall of his own, and used secretly to sell to Koshelev the forbidden works of the Martinists.

Naum Stepanitch was a Freemason and doorkeeper of the Lodge "Triangle of Light"; Koshelev, knowing the old man, had written to him during the campaign, asking him to look after his Moscow house and Pavlusha, should he find him in Moscow.

"I thought you were with your regiment, Pyotr Grigoryevitch, sir," said Polunin, picking up the books. "Why are you in this awful place?"

"I've come for Pavel . . . where is he?"

"Your brother is in the Golitsyn Hospital. When I called there last, the doctors said he was bad and did not let me see him."

"In the Golitsyn! So then . . . so then, Pavel has perished in the fire—that hospital has been burned down with all the people in it."

The old man shook his head.

"Perhaps he has perished. Everything is burning

all round. All Moscow is destroyed. . . . Come away, sir; I see the lodge is on fire already."

"Pavlusha, Pavlusha . . . " Koshelev whispered. He was sitting on the floor, clasping his head. Naum Stepanitch looked at him intently, and suddenly stamped his foot that had only a woolen stocking on.

"Moscow is done for," the old man cried in a thin falsetto. "You burn it yourselves! You ruin your own country!"

Koshelev uncovered his face. The old man stood over him shaking his rusty boots; his sharp chin, overgrown with grey bristles, was lighted from below.

"What are you talking about, Naum Stepanitch?"

"You've ruined the Russian Empire. . . . False saviours, false prophets, and the worst of them all—Fedka Rastopchin, the sly lynx, villain, traitor, rebel! . . ."

"Oh, you are mad!"

"No, sir, I am not mad, I am speaking the truth. . . . I see through Rastopchin's plan. He is vindicating Russia's honour by burning Moscow and all of you. . . . But it isn't the true Russia he is thinking of—he is defending serfdom, ignorance, shams. . . . He wanted to put a wall of fire between such a Russia and the Cæsars, to stop by this fire the working of destiny. . . . I tell you the

truth. Who do you suppose has been sent to our land? The glorius Cæsar, the ruler of nations, the Great Master of the Order . . . "

"Why, you are a traitor!"

"No, I am not. Rastopchin is a traitor—he set fire to his country, he put a barrier of fire between Russia and the Cæsar, he pushed our Fatherland into the abyss of fire, to be trampled upon by the mob. No, sir, I am not a traitor, but I think that Cæsar's rule and law is better than fire, rebellion, and lawlessness."

"What rebellion? It's a lie . . . "

"There's no lie in what I say. . . . The lie is in this burning of Moscow, and this lie will give rise to a worse fire. . . . Rastopchin serves the mob and not his country. . . . Do you know what he did with young Vereshtchagin? He shut up Urusov, a student, in the madhouse, he arrested Sandukov, the actor, and Mr. Reut, and Mr. Kluptchargov, and venerable old Novikov . . . "

"Nonsense, I assure you . . . "

"No, it isn't!" the old man cried in a shrill falsetto, but calmed down instantly. "Presently, those Rastopchins will burn the whole of Russia. . . ."

"Well, if Russia means serfdom, shams, and ignorance—let it burn!"

Trembling all over, Koshelev took a book out of the old man's hands, tore off the leather binding,

and twisting some pages into a spill, thrust it into the candle flame.

"This is madness, Pyotr Grigoryevitch! What are you doing?"

Koshelev waved the blazing spill in the air and threw it up at the muslin-covered candelabra. The muslin burst into a bright flame.

"Come to your senses, sir!"

The old man calmly looked at the tongue of flame which had jumped to the next candelabra.

"Then let the whole of Russia be burned!"

Koshelev laughed, and seizing the candle ran out of the door.

There was a bright light in the room. Looking up at the candelabra the old man laughed also—a rattling, sudden laugh.

Flames rose over the lodge in the yard. The coachmaker walked into the entrance-hall of the house. It was full of smoke, and in the midst of it stood a little old man in a black coat, holding in his arms a cage with a screeching bird in it, a flute, a boot, and some books.

"Who are you?" the coachmaker asked, drawing back. "Where is the young gentleman?"

Naum Stepanitch looked calmly at the red-haired peasant:

"The young gentleman has gone off his head and is setting fire to the house."

The coachman pulled up his hempen drawers and crossed himself. Wrapping his shirt round his head, the huge man walked into the smoke, spreading out his arms as though to catch something. The glow of the fire was reflected on his copper-coloured chest and back.

He ran into Koshelev, hit him, picked him up, and rushed out of the room.

At the front steps the man shook Koshelev violently by the collar of his sheepskin.

"I don't want to burn with you here—have you gone off your head? Come along after me to the Smolensky gate, and then to the Devitchy Field. . . . Now then, be quick! . . ."

XII

They ran down the middle of the road.

Naum Stepanitch was the first to lag behind. Koshelev called breathlessly: "Yevstigney! Yevstigney!" but the coachmaker did not look round.

At the street corner, the front of a house collapsed with a loud hiss. Koshelev saw the statues bend forward and tumble into the fire.

Soon he heard Yevstigney's loud breathing in front of him.

The coachmaker was flying through the fire like a huge archangel, and it took Koshelev all his strength

to keep pace with him. The man's shirt flapped on his back like a fiery banner.

Some women ran across the road with their skirts over their heads, and disappeared behind the flames.

"Yevstigney!" Koshelev called breathlessly.

The coachmaker turned his lion-like face and shouted something.

Soldiers were running alongside the burning houses, and Koshelev could not make out whether they ran towards them or in the opposite direction.

The street grew wider; shadows of men and horses were flitting to and fro between overturned carriages and furniture stacked on the pavement.

As he ran, Koshelev stumbled against an old woman sitting on a heap of travelling-bags. A little boy lay on the old woman's bony knees; his face was covered with a dark cap and his head was covered with blood.

"Help!" a voice called desperately in a crowd of soldiers thronging round an overturned coach.

The old woman clutched at Koshelev's sheepskin so tightly that she drew him forward, and he looked right into her round, blinking eyes.

"Dear sir, have pity . . . " she muttered. "Murder . . . "

"Help!" the voice went on calling.

Koshelev freed his sheepskin from her, and squatted before the old woman.

"What is it?—who are you?—whose boy is it?"

"Zaharyin's, sir . . . they've done for the little master, and now they are killing the young lady, Sofyushka."

"Help!" the sobbing voice called in the crowd.

A bony woman, her bonnet all awry, was sitting on the overturned coach, hitting the soldiers on their shakos.

A crowd of soldiers were holding an old man in a brown coat by the arms; his face was purple with shouting. A girl's face and a slender arm showed for a moment above the crowd.

The woman in the bonnet fell off the carriage. A sabre flashed, somebody was dragged along the ground. Girlish, slender arms gleamed white above the soldiers' heads.

Koshelev squeezed against the wheel. The old man in the brown coat was alone in the middle of the road. His hands moved rapidly over his chest as though he were searching for something.

"Help!" he sobbed, running after the soldiers.

"My God, my God!" Koshelev was shaking with fear.

"Ah, you have seen . . . you are Russian . . . " The lady in the bonnet crawled up to him. "Oh, you wretch . . . "

Koshelev pushed her away, and rushed after the old man.

Suddenly some huge creature pounced upon him out of the smoke, and struck him a heavy blow on the chest.

"I can't waste my time looking for you," a voice shouted angrily, and Koshelev recognised the lion-like face with the broken nose and fiery head of the archangel.

"Let me go!" Koshelev tried to wrench himself free, but the coachmaker dragged him by the arm.

With a boom like a cannon-shot a roof fell into the fire; the soldiers ran away. The old man in the brown coat walked with a quick, firm step out of the burning street, carrying someone in his arms; his face was covered with blood, but he was smiling. Koshelev recognised the slender girlish arm and the dark plait of hair, and hurried away. He had not died for this girl—he was a vile wretch, a coward! To think that he was still alive and would perhaps go on living, although he had disgraced himself for ever! As he ran, he sobbed loudly and angrily, without tears—like a dog barking.

Meanwhile the old Martinist, Naum Stepanitch, had dropped the cage with the talking blackbird. He tried to overtake Koshelev, but stopped to get his breath. Then he walked back. The cage was already smoking, the blackbird was beating with its shaggy wings against the bars, screeching furiously.

Hugging the books and the boot, which he had

not put on after all, Naum Stepanitch opened the cage door and dropped his flute.

"Go where you like now, bird."

The bird flew out, fluttered about in the fire, and falling suddenly on to Naum Stepanitch's shoulder, angrily beat him with its hard wings on the back of his head.

Naum Stepanitch walked on leisurely with the blackbird on his shoulder. He had forgotten his flute, but he was still hugging his books and carrying the boot in his free hand.

On the outskirts of the city the coachmaker was dragging Koshelev after him. Suddenly he let go his sheepskin sleeve and said in alarm:

"Keep still, I believe I hear a child . . . "

And in fact a small boy in a short nightdress was sitting by a fence on an overturned linen-basket; the dark spot of the navel showed on his fat little stomach, and his soft fair hair, blown by the wind, looked golden in the glow of the fire.

He was playing with a wooden spoon he held in his fist. Shaking it at the flames in the distance he cried in an aggrieved little voice:

"Naughty fire, naughty . . . "

"Someone must have dropped him," the coachmaker said, looking round.

Seeing two strangers who shut out the view and spoiled his game, the child cried pitifully.

"Sofyushka Zaharyin, Sofyushka Zaharyin," Koshelev repeated, looking angrily at the child and not seeing it. He was suffering acutely; it was as though a hot wind were burning everything within him.

"A child, sir, don't you see? . . . " the coachmaker said, giving him a push.

"A child . . . " Koshelev saw the little boy. "I say, we must take him."

"Of course."

The coachmaker bent over the child, who yelled breathlessly.

"Don't cry, you silly," he said, with a nervous smile. "We won't eat you, we aren't wolves!"

Yevstigney carried the child under his arm. The little boy probably felt comfortable, for he ceased crying and looked attentively at the glowing sky, still clutching his wooden spoon.

In the meantime, Naum Stepanitch mingled with the crowd in the Polianka. He sat down on the hot pavement by a wall and began putting on his boot. The ruffled blackbird jumped backwards and forwards on his shoulder.

At that moment a company of drunken Uhlans cut their way into the crowd. The people knelt down, crying aloud, but the Uhlans struck right and left with their swords.

Naum Stepanitch also raised his arms, trying to

ward off the blows, and his books fell to the ground. An Uhlan raised himself in the saddle and slashed with his sabre at the old man's wrinkled hands, and his face lit up with the glow of the fire.

XIII

The Emperor's valet walked up to him noiselessly from behind and bowed to his plump back.

"Will you change your uniform, Sire? . . . "

Napoleon did not look round. He was wearing the same green coat in which he had come out of the fire; tiny holes were burned in the cloth, and the gold embroidery on the collar had turned black.

The valet dusted the smuts off the Emperor's back and withdrew with a bow.

The Emperor was standing at a window of the Petrovsky Palace as though riveted to it, the top of his head pressed against the glass like a bull's. The yellowish skin of his cheeks moved with his heavy breathing.

The stillness of the Palace hindered his thinking.

There, in the roar of the fire, when they were leading him by the hands like one blind, he had understood how he could master the fire and conquer the fiery Moscow, the flaming Russia. A victory greater and more terrible than all his other victories was revealed to him.

The fire disturbed the beautiful symmetry of his plans, dimmed the perfect clarity with which everything had always appeared to him. The fire demanded from him decisions that disturbed the restful harmony—the full solstice—of which he was conscious in himself and in everything he thought and did. Victory over the fire of Moscow demanded other decisions—in the roar of the flames he had known what they were, but now, in the quiet room, his thoughts had grown dim and confused. The fire was like a dream that had revealed everything to him; but now he was no longer asleep, and the shadows of the fiery dream, the eddies of the fantastic visions, merely angered the waking man.

And yet he obstinately pressed his head to the glass, determined to gather into one clear image all that had confronted him in the chaos of the fire.

He had made a mistake on the very first day: he ought not to have sent Alexander that letter about peace. He recalled contemptuously Alexander's elusive moist blue eyes, and the insinuating way he had called him in Tilsit, "my brother, Your Majesty."

"No, my brother, Your Majesty, it isn't peace. What the fire has shown me is not peace but the vision of an incredible victory. The Muscovite Empire of Napoleon, Napoleon and Moscow, Napoleon and Russia . . . "

And pronouncing with difficulty the strange stumbling syllables of the foreign, savage word, he said firmly and clearly:

"Pugatchov."

Pugatchov—that name had been revealed to him in the fire. He, the Emperor, was like a Centaur, and his legs were the Revolution. A revolution in Russia would give him power that nothing could shake.

His victory would be not a peace made in Moscow, but the conquest of the whole Eastern Empire with all its wild wastes. He would destroy that small, lively army that had not been finished off at Borodino. He thought of it with a kind of rough affection; there were good soldiers in it and energetic generals. He knew them by name and had his own favourites among them—Bagration, Yermolov, Dohturov; he knew the different corps and divisions and the names of Suvorov's regiments. He would destroy that army and occupy Petersburg and the Urals; he would station his men on the borders of India, and his dragoons would ride on deer across the Siberian snows.

He would occupy Russia—this ocean of lands and peoples—in order to let loose in it the forces of revolution.

He would set free the peasants and the Tatars. They would stand in terror of his iron regiments,

they would obediently and gratefully lick his spurs, and he would direct all their fury against the spoiled Russian gentry—sensuous, sly, treacherous—the aristocracy of the barbarous Empire who, from the time of Peter onwards, had sworn allegiance to their Emperors in order to kill them.

He would bring to heel those complacent, self-confident slave-owners—that mixture of the Muscovite and the European adventurer. It would be easier to do this in Russia than in France, with its *de Ségurs*.

The Scythians with imposing coats of arms had given him a shock with their fire of Moscow. Very well, he would give them a shock by setting fire to Russia. He would set their own savage serfs against them. They had burned Moscow; he would destroy their false, deceitful power, and spread the fire of revolution throughout Russia, trampling into dust Alexander's barbarous, fantastic, ridiculous Empire.

The world would be awed by his inhuman cruelty and superhuman generosity. Robespierre would seem a mere puppy by comparison.

He would allow the slaves to slake their thirst for blood, and then the aristocrats in their absurd uniforms would crawl to him on their knees. He would save them. He would send them to Spain, and perhaps they would form part of the first detachment he would land in London. Rewards,

rents, titles, the honour of serving in the Grand Army, and the satisfaction of seeing their country's prosperity under his rule, would reconcile them to their fate.

A new life would dawn for Russia under Napoleon. He would establish true law and justice in it, and with that purpose he would first let the plough of revolution go over it and make the soil ready for his harvest.

He would liberate the serfs and bring them up to be his citizens. In another generation a young, vital, and great nation, a new nation of Bonapartides, would be welded into his great Empire.

He was a child of Revolution; he would beget revolution in Russia and make it the foundation of his invincible world-wide power. The Roman Eagle would soar out of the Russian fire, and the star of the divine Cæsar would rise from the East. Then everyone, and he himself, would believe that he was not merely a man and a hero but more than a man. The God-man would then come down to earth once more.

He would be the first Emperor of mankind, the viceroy of God. His son, the King of Rome, would be the second.

A deep tremor of tenderness passed over his heavy, yellowish face. With a mocking and affectionate smile that always appeared on his lips when he

thought of his son, he stepped back from the window, his head bowed as before.

The commander of the Guards, Bessière, had long been waiting for him with papers in a green morocco case which he kept folding and unfolding as he held it behind his back.

"Ah, Bessière," the Emperor said cheerfully in a slightly husky voice. His shining grey eyes dazzled the Marshal.

"We are marching to-morrow. I'll blow up Moscow and this red box—this Kremlin—and we'll march on Petersburg."

"Yes, Sire . . . "

Bessière heard Napoleon's strong and joyful breathing, and felt uncomfortable when he noticed that the Emperor was unshaven and had a smut under his eye. It was embarrassing and slightly ridiculous.

"But I am afraid we cannot march to-morrow. . . . In fact, I am certain we cannot," said Bessière.

"Ah, but why do you take it so literally? I don't mean to-morrow . . . the day after, or in two days' time. . . . To-day is Thursday?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Very well, then, on Saturday."

"Yes, Sire."

The Marshal cleaned his ear with his sharp-pointed

nail, as he always did before arguing with the Emperor.

"The roads are very bad, Sire, and we have no boots, and our supplies——"

"That's my business."

Napoleon began to feel irritated with Bessière. He felt that the Marshal could go on endlessly talking of bread, boots, the commissariat, and politely cleaning his ear.

"Well, Bessière, I haven't decided yet. . . . I'll call the Marshals together. . . . And you must excuse me, I will wash—I am all covered with smuts. . . ."

The Marshal looked at the sharp points of his boots.

"The army will be happy to go on to new victories," he said, "though it is tired after the long march. They had thought that Moscow would mean the end of the campaign. And now there's this fire. . . . The soldiers are looting, and there have been cases of gross indiscipline. When there is nothing better to take, they kill a man for the sake of a pair of boots."

"Ah, Bessière, you make me angry."

"Sire!"

"Yes, you do."

The Emperor turned to him; his hair was wet, his plump, dark-skinned chest was dripping with water.

The sharp smell of eau-de-cologne tickled Bessière's nostrils.

The dishevelled, half-naked Centaur in green breeches looked at the Marshal, crumpling a damp towel. His face looked fresher after he had rubbed it.

"You needn't tell me all this. . . . Stop the looting at once. Shoot the looters!"

"Yes, Sire."

"I won't detain you . . . I want you to collect for me all the information you can about the rebel Pugatchov, and also to find a Russian who speaks good French or a Frenchman who has lived long in Moscow. It's essential. . . ."

Bessière bowed without speaking, and went out.

The Emperor changed his uniform. The fresh cloth and the clean white waistcoat had a pleasant smell.

The parquet floor, the white-and-gold arm-chairs, and the mirror on the wall suddenly looked grey and faded as though the light behind the windows had grown dim.

The Emperor impetuously walked to the window with his firm and elastic step.

He pushed open the window. Big cold drops fell on his swarthy hands, his pointed nose, and the bald top of his head: the clipped acacias by the window were rustling in a driving mist of rain.

Pugatchov, who had appeared to him in the Moscow fire, was not to his taste. The wild visions of Moscow did nothing but disturb the clear trend of his thoughts and actions and darken the sunlight of his reign. He would do without Pugatchov.

The Emperor's wet face grew dim and misty in the chilly smoke of the rain.

XIV

The first downpour came at three o'clock on Thursday, September 5th.

Huge tongues of flame broke off in the grey-reddish mist, but, as though swelling out in the rain, burst out again, rising high and brilliant.

Soot was flying by the Petrovsky Palace. In the copse adjoining it soldiers were cutting down trees and making shelters. They put round them cracked mirrors and broken doors with brass ornaments.

Officers in damp uniforms blackened with smoke sat in arm-chairs under the rain and, chattering gaily, ate off bits of china and bent silver dishes that the soldiers had brought out of the fire.

There was a quantity of wine out of the Moscow cellars. Artillery horses wandering about the copse put their hoofs through the empty wine-boxes in the wet grass.

The staffs were quartered in the summer-houses

and Chinese pavilions. It was very crowded there, and everyone was laughing and shouting.

Dim red spots—the camp-fires of the King of Italy's corps—stretched as far as the Hodynsky Field. There were noisy crowds of soldiers in the copse and the field, horses, carriages, pyramids of army boxes.

In the Square behind the Palace they were buying and selling. Soldiers held out and passed from hand to hand copper samovars, boxes of coffee, nurses' pink cloaks, pieces of wet brocade, and fine Persian shawls that flapped in the wind, transparent and lovely, or clung closely to the wearers' backs.

It was all very merry and seemed like an amusing play. The soldiers bargained like Turks, glaring at each other, squatting on the ground and slapping their knees.

By the evening the rain had stopped, but the copse was full of wet smoke. The glow of the fire looked damp, reflected in the long, reddish drops on the bark and the heavy branches of the lime trees.

Close by the Palace, under the damp columns, sat the wives of Moscow tradesmen, their kerchiefs pulled over their faces, and their skirts wrapped tight round their knees.

The tradesmen glanced at the Palace like trapped birds and bowed low to every French soldier and officer that walked past. These Moscow citizens, refugees from the fire, had come to ask the Emperor's

protection. He gave orders that they should be given a drink of hot coffee; but no coffee was found, or perhaps the order was forgotten.

As night came on, a dry wind rustled in the big lime trees and a breath of heat came from Moscow.

The lattice-work Chinese pavilions, brilliantly lighted from within, looked like the stage of a theatre. Gay voices and laughter re-echoed along the camp-fires.

Each fresh party of soldiers returning from Moscow loaded with sacks and boxes was greeted with applause.

The soldiers often brought with them Russians, who carried the booty for them. The peasants threw their burden into the mud by the camp-fires and stood in silence with their caps off.

One of them stepped up nearer, bowed, shaking his hair, and said in a plaintive sing-song:

"Mossoo, give us something."

The French flung out to the peasants some box or a piece of cloth. They fell upon it in a body and had to be driven away with blows.

Moscow was beginning to burn again.

The tradesmen's wives pulled off their kerchiefs and looked, one after another, at the distant glow. One of them set up a wail, another took it up, and they all joined in. The soldiers swore at this howling, and the women grew silent.

At daybreak a violent wind struck the copse, lifting the horses' tails, driving the flames of the campfires and blowing down the doors and mirrors placed against the walls of the shelters; it struck a munition box, the chains under the wheels clanked loudly—and rain came down in sheets. The market in the Square behind the Palace emptied instantly; the soldiers rushed away, holding up the skirts of their coats.

Cold streams descended upon the flames of Moscow throughout September 6th.

It was as though the sky over Moscow had burst, letting out a flood of rain.

The red smoke turned black and crept low in heavy clouds, slanting columns of it rose over the huge expanse of the fire, turning lighter as they rose into the air. The rain sometimes stopped for a moment as though to gather strength for a new downpour.

No lights were burning in the Chinese pavilions and summer-houses in the Petrovsky Park, sentries with their coats thrown over their heads had to jump across streams of water by the Palace, and in the Square huge pools were bubbling with sand.

A drozhki looking like a great lump of mud drove up to the Palace, raising clouds of spray.

A thin lady in a blue bonnet, the ribbons of which stuck to her cheeks, pulled down the dripping wet

blue skirt she had thrown over her head, shook off the water, and stepping out of the drozhki skipped across the courtyard, trying to avoid the pools.

Marshal Mortier met her on the steps. He came out into the rain hatless, and, standing in a pool, offered his arm to the lady. Arm in arm with the Marshal, the lady walked into the Palace.

She lifted the hem of her blue skirt. She had another, a purple one, underneath, which she also lifted, showing a white petticoat with mud-soiled frills.

The lady turned away from the Marshal and quickly wiped her face with her petticoat.

"It's simply a flood," she said. "My bonnet, my frills! . . . But I think I can go in to His Majesty now."

The wet lady in the blue bonnet who had come to the Petrovsky Palace looking like a wet scarecrow was a shop-keeper from the Kuznetsky, Madame Ober-Chalme. Thin and bony, with gold bangles on her wrists, a pinched sallow face, and a brown wart on her sharp chin, she looked more like an old gypsy than a Frenchwoman. Her left eye watered, but her glance was quick and bright.

Waiting by the white doors of the Emperor's room, the lady lifted her blue skirt, and holding it against her flat stomach, pulled out of the side pocket of her lilac underskirt a tortoise-shell snuff-box.

She took a good pinch and sniffed with relish. Tiny hairs stuck out of her nostrils. A dark pool was slowly forming round her on the parquet floor.

She sneezed in the doorway. When she curtseyed to the Emperor, she sneezed again, and covered her nose with her thin hand.

Napoleon smiled slightly.

"You're cold, aren't you?"

"No, Your Majesty, I am not cold, but this snuff . . . a Neapolitan captain gave it to me—it's quite a little too strong. Forgive me, but I——" The lady quickly lifted her blue skirt, then the lilac one, and something white showed underneath, perhaps her drawers. The Emperor turned away. Madame Ober-Chalme blew her nose noisily and with relish.

"Ah, Your Majesty, to think what's going on! I have been ruined in two days . . . " She coughed.

His hands behind his back and his head slightly on one side, the Emperor, smiling affably, was not listening to her complaints.

Madame Ober-Chalme, warming up to the subject, told him boldly, her bracelets jingling as she spoke, that although her house and her work-girls had been saved by the Neapolitan officers, she had been robbed—no, not by the officers—pieces of velvet had been carried away, a bedstead, three hundred thousand roubles out of the chiffonier—no, five hun-

dred thousand—soldiers stuck ostrich feathers into their shakos—it's funny, but it's revolting too—she was ruined—she would allow no one . . .

The lady's pinched face wrinkled suddenly, and she sneezed loudly, throwing back her head like a horse.

"Please excuse me, Your Majesty; I keep sneezing," she said in surprise.

"Take some of my snuff. I think it's milder than the Neapolitan captain's. I hope your complaint will be seen to."

The Emperor tapped his snuff-box with his nail and gave it to the lady. Her cold fingers touched his hot ones for an instant.

"I do not doubt Your Majesty's sense of justice," she said, curtseying with the snuff-box in her hand.

Napoleon was growing irritated with this absurd old woman in wet skirts. He had asked for some sensible person who knew the Russians well, and they had sent him a sneezing shopkeeper. He tossed his head obstinately, and his grey eyes gleamed as he looked at Madame Ober-Chalme.

"All the same I would ask you . . . " he said, with vexation. "I am told you have lived in Moscow long enough."

"I believe I was born in Moscow. . . . It wasn't a bad place, not at all bad, Your Majesty."

"I am sure of it. Wait. Think, and answer me simply and straightforwardly, please."

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"Very well. What do you think of freeing the Russian serfs, those millions of slaves?"

"Freeing millions of slaves? . . . "

Madame Ober-Chalme looked intently at the Emperor with wide-open eyes, and sank into thought, holding her head on one side. Her left eye watered considerably; in her wet bonnet, with wisps of damp hair hanging down her cheeks, she looked very much like an old Jew.

Slowly and thoughtfully she put a pinch of snuff first into one nostril then into the other. A sad and intelligent look came into her eyes. Her bracelets jingled as she handed the snuff-box back to the Emperor.

"Sire, it is not for a woman to think of such things. . . . But I will tell you frankly: one-third will understand your generous action, the other two-thirds will not even grasp what you mean. I know the Russian serfs."

"But they may be carried away by the example of the others," the Emperor said quickly, turning the snuff-box in his fingers.

"No, Sire. I am an old woman and you must forgive me for venturing to speak of it, but I know what I am talking about. You're mistaken. . . .

Russia is different from Southern Europe. Russian serfs are suspicious and distrustful. It is difficult to rouse them. The gentry will take advantage of the serfs' hesitation, and I assure you, Sire, that this glorious revolution, this grand idea of freedom will be misrepresented to them by their owners as something godless and impious. It would be extremely difficult to carry away those peasants; in fact, I venture to say it would be impossible, Sire."

The Emperor took a pinch of snuff, as he always did when he was annoyed. He nodded and turned away to the window.

Greatly impressed by the short interview, the old woman curtseyed and backed out of the door, leaving a long wet trail behind her on the parquet floor.

XV

The cold, drizzling rain made the Emperor and his suite bad tempered.

In the Hodynka camp-fires were made of mahogany tables, doors, and window-frames, and the damp wood cracked as it burned. The soldiers, black with smoke, got up reluctantly in the cold drizzle from their beds of straw, looking with indifference at the shadows of the riders in the mist.

Many were asleep by the fires that had gone out.

In wooden shelters men lay huddled together like sheep.

The officers, bespattered with mud, were sitting in wet arm-chairs. Many of them had their legs wrapped up in cashmere shawls and Siberian furs. They put down in the mud their plates and bowls of black soup or burnt porridge, cooked on the open fire, and stood up as reluctantly as the soldiers.

It was the dull morning of September 7th. The Emperor was returning from the Petrovsky Palace to the Kremlin.

The silence of the men on that drizzly morning was perhaps a sign of their profound weariness after the looting and savagery during the fire.

When regiment after regiment—thousands of men with bloodshot eyes—plunged into the fire for booty, they brought out of the flames seeds of destruction. The army began to disintegrate in the fire. In the burning streets regiments were led by Filka the convict and the street-women.

In the streets thousands of people were selling their loot—lumps of gold and silver, handfuls of pearl covered with the reddish film of the fire—anything that could easily be stuffed into knapsacks.

Bars of light-coloured metal out of the Mint storerooms were put on the market. A mixture of zinc and tin, they were thought to be Siberian platinum and valued higher than anything else.

Thousands of men were sitting by the camp-fires in the liquid mud, cooking burnt dough or horse-flesh, eating it with their fingers off silver or cracked china dishes, and drinking wine out of the bottles. They were thinking and saying that Moscow was conquered and punished—though they hardly knew themselves why it should have been punished—that now there would be peace, and they would be marching home before the first snow; the Emperor himself had pointed to Moscow with his glove, and said, "There is the end of the campaign."

Thousands of other men, looking gloomily at the devastation all round them, were cleaning their muskets, sewing with coarse thread pieces of cloth under their ammunition pouches, and with their last money buying from the looters pieces of linen and bits of fur to wrap round their feet, which were still sore with the long march. They were thinking and saying that everyone had gone mad, that the wretched looters, the rabble the Emperor had brought to Moscow, the stinking Poles in their gaudy dress, the brutish Bavarians, the thievish Italians, would be their undoing; there were Cossacks round Moscow, the Russians were not defeated. They were saying that if they received no orders to shoot the marauders, they would take things in hand themselves and smash their heads.

The orders were given, and thousands of men, swearing angrily in all European tongues, drove the looters to the blackened walls, pulled off their uniforms, and emptied their bags of broken silver, cartridges, rings, soldiers' buttons, and sodden pieces of bread with straw sticking to it.

The men to be shot waited, trembling, by the walls, their hands between their knees, their yellowish bodies shivering all over.

Orders were given to confiscate all plundered goods; the guard was to keep watch over them.

Boxes and bags lumbered the streets. Soldiers crowded round the depots, abusing the Guards—in Moscow as usual, the sleek Guards, the smart puppets of the parades, would alone stuff their pockets.

The Emperor was riding into Moscow at a walking pace. In a street near the Ohotny Ryad a crowd of peasants and merchants knelt down before his horse with a dull murmur. Napoleon glanced at their smoky, dishevelled heads, and rode on in silence.

He was irritable that day, and feeling as though he had left something undone, or had failed in something; and that depressed him. He was returning to the Kremlin, but he did not know what he was to do. One or twice he passed his glove over his unshaven cheek and his wet, bristly eyebrows.

He did not look at the soldiers; he knew better

than Bessière that he had no more army left, that the fire had laid bare its charred skeleton.

Carcasses of horses and bodies of bearded men that looked like grey bags lay here and there in the waste places, still full of smoke.

Incendiaries had been hung on the cast-iron lamp-posts of the Tverskoy boulevard. Some of the bodies had pieces of paper pinned on to them with the words, "Moscow Incendiary." Clerical students, policemen, shop assistants, and Government clerks, had been hanged, and also Filka the thief and his comrade the coiner—the convict with the shorn head.

The rain laid bare the charred remains of the fire, the city's smouldering entrails—black heaps of ruins. Soot was flying over Moscow. Damp smoke crept low and as it were stealthily along the burnt-out streets.

The sappers and fusiliers had saved the Kremlin, the Kuznetsky, the Rozhdestvenska, the two Lubiankas, the Post Office, and the Moroseika; but there, too, the houses were black with smoke and had had their gates and windows smashed by the plunderers.

Night fell upon the city. An echo of screams and moans came from the distant suburbs, gardens, and cemeteries. Looting was going on there now. Soldiers were ripping open women's shifts, and

killing men in the dark for the sake of a pair of boots.

Early in the morning the Emperor walked up the steps of the Orphanage. He had not shaved, and his face looked grey and heavy.

The stewards, the doctors, and the director of the Orphanage, Ivan Akinfievitch Tutumlin, were waiting for him at the top of the stairs. His Majesty wished personally to inquire about the condition of the house and of the hundreds of luckless children abandoned by Count Rastopchin to the flames.

Ivan Akinfievitch was a little old man in a blue swallowtail coat and white tie; his grizzled bushy eyebrows twitched as he shot quick glances at the Emperor.

The Emperor was saying something with vexation, breathing hoarsely. His words would be understood in Petersburg, where this old man would write.

It was as though a void had suddenly opened up around him; he had to speak before foolish shopkeepers and absurd old men, but what he was saying was true. He had thought of it in the night, and he understood that all that was happening in Moscow was simpler and cruder than his thoughts and decisions: the Russians were overwhelmed by their fate, their army was half destroyed, Moscow was

burnt, and he was in Moscow. It was all so much simpler than he had thought: the vanquished would ask for peace, Alexander would answer his letter. Peace—yes, he was ready for peace; he was not a Pugatchov. He thought during the night of that word, "peace," calm and serene like a sunny day, and it seemed to him the only way out.

"We must put an end to this destruction"—he very nearly said "to this absurd war," but he heard his own voice and began watching himself.

"I have never carried on war in this sort of way. I don't want such a war. My soldiers fight, they do not burn cities. From Smolensk onwards I have seen nothing but ashes. . . . I repeat, this destruction must be stopped. . . . You can write to Her Majesty that her Institution has escaped the general fate, and that I have taken charge of it."

Ivan Akinfievitch had difficulty in following French, and shifted his feet, shooting surprised glances at the Emperor from under his bushy eyebrows.

XVI

Koshelev was dreaming of the fire.

He dreamt that huge gypsies in red and yellow dresses were dancing round the field, rattling tambourines, their shawls flapping in the wind, and he

ran to and fro between their enormous stamping feet, calling his brother, while the gypsies looked for him, and cried: "Sofyushka, Sofyushka!"

He woke up, and all that had happened in the fire seemed to him a dream. He fumbled round him in the dark. His palms came in contact with damp, sticky velvet, and he understood that he was touching the coachmaker's back. Yevstigney lay on his stomach, with both arms folded under his chest. Koshelev fancied the man had died, but, pulling at his velvet jacket, felt the living warmth underneath. The coachmaker's back was rising and falling evenly as he breathed.

"Get up, get up," Koshelev whispered. "Get up, I say."

Yevstigney sat up and shook himself, stirring the cool air.

"Yes, what is it?"

"How dark it is! It's night. All the lights are out."

"Of course they are. It has been raining."

"Where are we?"

"Why, sir, you are like one lost! We are at Hamovniki, in the Devitchy Field. . . . The rain has put out the fire, thank God."

The coachmaker sneezed with the damp and carefully moved his legs in the dark.

"Hullo, I believe there's a live soul there!"

"A live soul—yes, yes," a voice said eagerly in the darkness.

Koshelev could now see that noiseless shadows were moving all over the Field.

He heard the murmur of the rain and the distinct tap-tap of occasional drops falling on a wooden board.

Koshelev's sheepskin was wet, and wisps of wool stuck to his hands. He moved his palm across his face and wet knees as though to make sure of himself. He shuddered:

"How cold it is!"

The coachmaker said nothing. Someone close by was breathing hoarsely and irregularly, and from the sound Koshelev guessed that it was the man who had spoken about "a live soul."

This breathing, the darkness, and the sighing of the damp wind that sometimes still brought a whiff of heat soothed him. He shook himself as the coachmaker had done, and leaned against his warm back.

"Do you know, I haven't had anything to eat for four days."

"That's nothing. You'll get over it. . . . Look here, sir; you sit still, and I'll go round the Field. I want to hear what people are saying. And you sit still. It's fearfully dark."

"But I'll come with you." Koshelev rose to go.

"No, sit still, sir," the coachmaker said authoritatively, putting his hand down on Koshelev's shoulder. "Put the child inside your coat; he's asleep."

Koshelev sat down. For some reason he readily and gladly obeyed Yevstigney, who had led him through the flames like a fiery archangel. He covered the little boy with the skirt of his coat; the warm, small body warmed him.

The coachmaker's footsteps sounded against the damp earth as he walked away, and then were heard no more.

Light fingers rested on Koshelev's back and shoulders. Hardly touching him, they passed over his body. A cool palm touched his hair, moved down his cheek, and a clear, mellow voice—a girl's voice—asked:

"Are you here, sir?"

"Yes."

"Take some bread."

In the dark Koshelev pressed a slender hand.

"Thank you, I don't need it."

"Please accept it, sir," the same voice said farther away.

Koshelev held the bread in his hands carefully, as though it were something holy, and for a long time listened with strange emotion for the girlish voice to call to him again out of the darkness.

The morning mist had risen when Koshelev saw

before him the coachmaker's pale face wreathed in vapour.

Yevstigney sat down and roughly pushed Koshelev's knees away.

"There's looting going on all round," he brought out breathlessly. "The women are having a bad time of it. They are robbing people right and left. They can do what they like, the brutes!"

In the mist Koshelev could make out the shadowy outline of a tall bed. A damp carpet hung down from the back of it.

A nun was standing beside the bed. Koshelev gave the child to the coachmaker and stood up, gazing at her pale face, that seemed luminous in the mist. She was not so tall as he, and in her black habit, with a leather belt and black velvet cap, she looked like a boy.

"So it was you that gave me bread?"

The girl silently moved a wet strand of hair off her cold cheek.

"Thank you." Koshelev looked attentively at the slender girl, and added, "Thank you, mother."

A man covered with a damp carpet lay on the bed that stood between them. A patch of light was reflected on his bald forehead, and his pointed nose was wet with rain. The coachmaker stood beside Koshelev, and bending down, listened to the man's short, irregular breathing.

"I believe it's Korobeyev, the merchant."

The nun shifted her velvet cap as though it were too heavy for her, and answered softly:

"He is my father."

"Yes, I know him . . . Savva Andronyevitch, drysalter. Here he is, and here is his daughter, Paraskeva. . . . But why are you and your father in the Field?"

The nun's bright, grey eyes dwelt on Koshelev for a moment.

"Because of the fire. There's no help to be had anywhere now. Our street caught fire, and the men set out to carry my father to the Novodevitchy Convent, but the Field was in a turmoil, and crowds were everywhere, and so they dropped the bed here."

"That's a bad job. But what has become of your men?"

"When the flames came close to the Field, our foreman said to me: 'Since Moscow is on fire, we'd like to have a go at it too. You wait here, Parasha' —and off they went."

Koshelev looked with pity and admiration at the slender boyish figure.

"But you are a nun," he said at last.

"No, I am not a nun, only a novice. I have promised to serve in the convent for a time for my father's health's sake."

"Very well; then we can take your father to the convent: they must give him shelter there."

"I think it is all full up there, and they won't take him in. So many old people and invalids have been carried out of the fire. But if you could be so kind, sir, as to find Mother Evgenia, and ask her permission . . . "

"Yes, certainly I will. Come along, Yevstigney —I don't know the way."

The coachmaker nodded, and carefully placed the sleeping child in the girl's arms.

XVII

Wisps of mist floated about the Devitchy Field, and in the morning twilight the low-lying stretch of ground was wreathed in vapour like a marsh.

People were sitting and lying in groups, or wandering about in the fog searching for something on the ground.

A wet pillow showed grey in the mud; a red copper samovar stood on a hamper. White sheets or tablecloths that had been taken out of it had muddy footprints on them.

House-serfs crowded round a bag of sugar. They were taking out the yellowish stuff in handfuls, probably dividing it between them. The bag was wet, and syrup oozed out of it.

A peasant in a white coat lay with his face in a puddle, singing or perhaps crying, in a high falsetto, "Ee—ee—ee . . . "

A borzoi dog with a torn leather collar studded with brass limped away from him into the fog, its tail between its legs, sniffing the air.

An old man, or it might have been an old woman, in a dressing-gown and a brocaded night-cap, sat bending over a basket.

Huge ikons were piled up one against the other in a puddle; the dark paint was wet with the rain, and drops trickled down the dull gold of the setting.

Women sat on boxes, their coats thrown over their heads; tradespeople walked about among the baskets, tucking up the skirts of their coats, or stood in groups in the mud, whispering together sorrowfully, their bearded faces black with soot.

An unshaven man in a nankeen coat, with a red silk kerchief over his head, was tying a ragged blanket to two posts. A woman in a bonnet, with a soldier's brass-buttoned coat thrown over her shoulders and damp stockings on her feet, sat under the shelter of the blanket nursing a baby. Her flabby breast was blue with cold, and the shivering baby's little head was pressed close to the brown nipple. The blanket flapped in the wind like a flag.

At the woman's feet there was a lighted samovar, a pile of books in leather bindings, and a violin case.

The top of the case was torn, showing the faded blue velvet of the lining. The unshaven man in the red kerchief crouched before the samovar, using his boot to fan the charcoal.

A hum of voices rose over the Field, a confused and melancholy murmur that suggested a huge slave-market.

Koshelev moved his hand over his damp hair, glancing round the Field with his greenish eyes.

"Burnt to ashes. . . . So this is it. . . . That's what Russia has come to."

The coachmaker said nothing. The word "Russia" that he uttered so suddenly, or perhaps the books and the violin beside the torn blanket, reminded Koshelev of Naum Stepanitch hugging his books, and he looked round as though the old Martinist might be near.

"This is all there is left of Naum Stepanitch and his Freemasons and forbidden books. . . . It's a pity. . . . I am sorry for Russia."

Unendurable, burning pity flooded his heart like a wave of ecstasy.

"Russia!" he repeated in surprise.

Some soldiers were sitting beside a ditch. He recognised them for Russian artillerymen by their black collars.

The soldiers were barefoot and bareheaded. Steam rose from their overcoats. One of them

was wrapping up his leg as slowly and carefully as though he were swathing a baby.

A huge gypsy lay with his head in a brass basin, his legs in blue Turkish trousers wide apart. His face, thrown back, looked bluish-black, and his curly beard was slate-coloured. As he breathed, his blue waistcoat with silver buttons rose rapidly and unevenly over his flat stomach.

Old gypsy women, their heads wrapped up in faded shawls with golden braid, sat round him, facing the grey upturned beard. The man's head kept banging against the copper basin.

French soldiers in tucked-up blue overcoats stepped over the gypsy as they darted about the Field.

The soldiers sat on iron-bound boxes, on sacks, and on white, gilded arm-chairs sunk right up to the seats in the mud. They were keeping watch over the sacks and the boxes, and their muskets with fixed bayonets rested against their knees. Marshal Davout's division was camping in the Devitchy Field.

A sallow, dark-skinned, flat-nosed gypsy girl was dancing. The red rag on her head jumped about as she struck her worn tambourine, making a dull clatter. The girl's necklets clinked, her beautiful, coffee-coloured, sloping shoulders trembled, her red skirts rustled, and dirty bits of her ragged shift

peeked out at the back. The girl was shaking a metal mug and shouting:

"Mossoo, mossoo, give me some silver!"

A soldier put his arm round the girl, but she wrenched herself free and pushed the soldier away with her battered mug—the coins flew out like a sparkling fan. The men around them laughed. The dull thud of the tambourine sounded farther away.

In another place a young priest in a grey cassock stood among a group of bare-headed people who listened to him, breathing audibly. The wind blew the priest's fair hair on to his thin face; he raised his hand warningly, baring to the elbow his soft arm, with a bone standing out at the wrist covered with fair down, and his Adam's apple moved as he shouted:

"The sky will be of iron and the earth like brass, maidens shall be overtaken in the mountains, youths shall be pierced with spears and given over to the fire. . . . Ye shall hunger after Me but I will not stir, I will turn temples into cattle-sheds, I will overthrow the censer. . . . The tormenter shall torment, the slayer shall slay, the liar shall sit in the judgment seat. . . . Ye shall call to Me but I will not heed. . . ."

A young woman was standing behind the priest. She was bare-headed, and there was a look of terror

in her dry, glittering eyes. A baby was struggling in her arms, kicking its bluish legs, and its narrow swathing-bands hung down to the ground.

"Don't listen to him, don't listen, good people," she cried desperately. "He is out of his mind. . . . Don't heed him. . . . It's dreadful for baby and me."

Farther on some Persians or Armenians with coal-black conical beards, all in tall Astrakhan caps, sat round a big wooden trencher filled with chopped meat or bread, leisurely dipping into it their pale fingers covered with silver rings.

As though turned to stone, sinister-looking old women sat huddled on their boxes, clutching their bundles in their bony hands.

An old man, with nothing but his drawers on, and a piece of sacking thrown over his shoulders, walked proudly along the field, strutting like a cock. He was followed by a crowd of boys, shop-assistants, and house-serfs, who watched him mockingly but with some apprehension; many of them were grinning.

The thin old man's proud and ridiculous walk, his eagle-like, wrinkled face struck Koshelev as distinctly foreign. The coachmaker said:

"Here's a wonder for you."

The old man was a French emigrant, a sexton or organist of St. Louis' Church. A gaping crowd

followed him about and listened to him with amused attention.

"I told him not to go," he began in broken Russian, looking angrily at Koshelev. "But he went and so did I. He tied round his best hat the King's white ribbon; he was a Royalist and an exile, Chevalier de la Payère. Bonaparte's soldiers saw us. . . . I am a Frenchman, yes; but they are not Frenchmen, they are Jacobins—robbers; they killed our King, they destroyed France, they drove all the good men away. . . . Oh, you don't know what they are—they are rebels, they haven't a single priest in their army, they never hear Mass. . . . They said to the Chevalier de la Payère: 'You have no *tricolore* in your hat, you are no Frenchman.' And he said: 'Yes, I am, and I am a servant of my martyred King. . . .' 'Ah, a damned Royalist, an émigré,' they said, and began beating us with their muskets. The Chevalier de la Payère drew his sword, and they killed him. . . . I'll have nothing to do with them, they are brigands—Jacobins."

Girls in crumpled high-waisted dresses of some striped material sat alongside the ditch by the convent wall. Their *accroche-cœur* curls were matted; one had her skirt bunched up above her knees, showing a white stocking with a black garter tied in a bow and part of a bare mud-bespattered leg.

The plump, heavy girls belonged either to some nobleman's theatre, now abandoned to the enemy, or to a brothel that had been burnt down. They were all crying loudly, blowing their noses with their skirts and smearing rouge, mud, and tears all over their cheeks. Soldiers were standing round them.

At the convent gates Koshelev glanced at the ikon under glass with a mass of lighted tapers underneath it.

Maimed and blind beggars sat under the gateway, displaying withered arms and deformed legs in greyish rags. Yevstigney made his way through the crowd.

No one could tell them where Mother Evgenia was. A hunchback nun in a black robe and cap suddenly turned her swarthy face to them. Her spectacles glittered.

"I am Mother Evgenia—what is it?"

She put on the ground an earthenware bowl with some rags and blood-stained water in it, and pulled down the sleeve over her sinewy arm.

"What is it?"

Koshelev introduced himself.

"Never mind that now. You see I am in a hurry —there's a woman in labour—be quick. . . ."

Koshelev told her of the merchant, Korobeyev, who was dying in the field and his daughter, Paraskeva.

"Very well, bring him along. And tell Paraskeva that God will not forsake her."

XVIII

Several times on the way back, Koshelev fancied that they were coming to the place and would find the bed just there.

But though the people and the bundles were exactly alike, they were not the same. He did not see the nun, and he felt a strange pang at his heart at the thought that he might never see her again.

That nun, so like a boy in her velvet cap—that small, bright-eyed ember picked up in the fire of Moscow—inspired him, as everything did that day, with an overwhelming, burning pity.

The nun was sitting on the bed with her back to them. They walked up quietly. She drew herself up, but did not move her arms: the child lay sleeping in her lap. She looked at Koshelev and then at Yevstigney with bright, unseeing eyes.

The man on the bed was completely covered with the rug. The coachmaker bent over him and crossed himself.

"He has passed away. . . . His feet are stiff already."

Koshelev slightly raised the carpet over the dead man's head: the white face covered with silvery

bristles rested on the white pillow, the chin was tied with a clean handkerchief, the thin eyelids lightly covered the sunken eyes.

"We must take him to the convent, anyway," Yevstigney whispered. "Give me a hand, sir."

"Let me help you get up," Koshelev said, taking the girl by the arm. "God will not forsake you. . . ."

They lifted the bed. The corpse was not heavy. At first Koshelev could not keep in step with the coachmaker, but after a time he did; Yevstigney walked at the foot, and he at the head of the bed. They carried the dead man feet foremost. When Koshelev's fingers grew numb he said "Stop"; the bed rested on the ground, and then they went on again.

The girl walked beside them carrying the baby. Her dry, shining eyes looked into the distance. The bed creaked and swayed; the dead man's arm slipped off his chest and his hand dragged along the ground. Without stopping, the girl placed his arm across his chest again.

People stepped aside for them and moved their legs out of the way, crossing themselves. Women got up and walked with them in silence, peeping into the dead man's face.

The girls with matted curls that had been crying loudly by the convent wall were now stamping

about among the soldiers in a clumsy dance, their heavy breasts wabbling at every movement. The soldiers swung them round, making little cat-like jumps, and one of the girls, holding up her coil of hair and rustling her skirts, squealed coquettishly.

Marshal Davout and Captain St. Claire of the Field fusiliers, who occupied the convent with his men, rode along the convent wall.

Davout had a cold, and kept his black cloak wrapped tightly round him. He had a white silk scarf round his neck, and it threw a light on his longish weary face. Davout's division was encamped near the convent, but the Marshal slept in the Kremlin in a warm room behind the main altar of the Tchudov Monastery. Captain St. Claire escorted the taciturn Marshal there every evening.

With a cold, absent-minded smile, Davout listened to the captain telling him how he picked up every day in the burnt-out Moscow streets books bound in parchment and embossed leather—generally blackened and crumpled volumes of Voltaire and Rousseau, and once a tiny volume of Lafontaine.

St. Claire was saying that he was ashamed of being a Frenchman, that if these bearded men really had set fire to the town, the Emperor should have stopped the fire, the murders, and the robberies—he ought to have stopped it, he could have done it even if it had been impossible. This was slaughter, not war,

St. Claire was saying. Europe had disgraced itself, and someone was bound to expiate all that was happening here—someone would have to shoulder the guilt, and he thought it would be they.

"What would you have, St. Claire?" Davout said, shrugging his shoulders. "No one is to blame, neither we nor they. As always, it is His Majesty Chance that is to blame. . . ."

The white scarf threw a light on the Marshal's longish face in the gathering darkness.

St. Claire talked of the copper cupolas tempered by the fire, of Muscovite and Byzantine mosaics. The tall, handsome Moscow serfs in their national dress looked like bearded Greeks, he said, and their women, the Moscow Madonnas, reminded one by their severe and tender charm of Byzantine mosaics, translucent with golden light. The Marshal said nothing.

By the wall of the Novodevitchy Convent, St. Claire pointed to a bed that was being carried through the gates.

"Here's a group worthy of a master's chisel. . . . They are carrying a corpse. They might have come off some ancient vase. . . . And that Moscow nun with the child in her arms is like a goddess in a black tunic . . . "

Putting down the bed, Yevstigney turned his lion-like head to them and swore.

As Koshelev put the bed down, he recalled the first look that the girl had given him when they found her father dead. That look, and the corners of her fine eyebrows reminded him of his brother, Pavlusha.

Mother Evgenia's sinister spectacles glittered behind the girl. The hunchback patted Parasha on her trembling shoulders, holding the bowl with bloodstained water in her other hand.

"Why are you standing there?" she said sharply over the girl's head to the two men. "Go and dig the grave. . . . Find Mother Olimpiada, who looks after the churchyard. . . . The child can stay with us."

The sky had cleared towards evening, and the Moscow comet was aglow over the convent grounds.

XIX

Koshelev and Yevstigney wandered about the Field till nightfall. It surprised Koshelev that many people called him "sir," though he did not tell anyone who he was. He walked aimlessly, as though slightly drunk, among bags and baskets, helping the tradespeople to carry their boxes through the mud. With eager curiosity he looked at all the new sights that the Devitchy Field had revealed to him in the rust-red brilliance of a September day.

A strange feeling of expectation possessed him after the fire, and when he had said to the coachmaker

that "Russia was done for," when he had thought that "all was lost," in the very depths of his heart he knew that it was not so, but that something new was beginning now, more beautiful than all his hopes.

People in the crowd spoke in whispers, their faces close together, and grew silent when an enemy soldier walked past.

"The Commander-in-chief is surrounding them, the Tsar himself is bringing up a tremendous force," Koshelev heard them say. "They are eating horseflesh. A Cossack said, we must bear up till Thursday, and on Thursday our men will come."

A secret light seemed to be burning in their eyes, as though they had absorbed the fire, and it lived there as a glowing ember. "It's beginning," Koshelev thought—but he could not have explained what he meant.

The comet shone over the field at nights. Throwing up their beards that looked silvery and transparent in the twilight, the peasants slowly crossed themselves as they stared at it, and the old women, uncovering their faces, murmured in sinister tones: "It's alight, it's alight!" After midnight the comet disappeared. In his sleep Koshelev heard the coachmaker whispering and sighing:

"The mysterious star has gone out, God help us . . . "

The coachmaker always went away after mid-

night. Koshelev thought he was an Old Believer, and people said that in the nights Old Believers went stealing ancient ikons from churches, and had carried away the whole of the Sretensky ikon-screen and the Jerusalem ikon of the Mother of God from Uspensky Cathedral.

"Where are you off to?" Koshelev whispered, raising himself on his elbow. "You always wander about alone; let us go together."

"I won't go with you," Yevstigney's voice answered gloomily out of the darkness. "It's not the thing for a gentleman to wander about at nights. . . . I can't sleep, so I walk about. But you must sleep, sir. . . ."

It was daybreak before Yevstigney, trembling with cold, crept under Koshelev's sheepskin.

"You've been wandering about till you're chilled to the bone," Koshelev said, covering him up. "What news?"

"News . . . The villains are about. They are behind every corner. . . . They seized a little girl, and she saw me and cried: 'Uncle, help!' . . . One of them shot at me and I ran away. I ran away, I tell you."

And he roughly pushed Koshelev's knee away.

"Sh—sh!" Koshelev whispered. "We must get away from Moscow. . . . I'll join the army; come with me."

"Army, indeed!"

"Why, have you heard anything?"

"No, I haven't . . . there are all sorts of rumours."

"I'll go back to the army. Find out for me how I can leave Moscow."

"They say one can get out beyond the Yauzsky bridge. . . . I'll find out for you."

Koshelev had decided to leave Moscow, and now, waiting for the coachmaker, he wandered in the convent grounds as though looking for someone. He picked his way among the sleepers. Sometimes a voice from under his feet would say to him without any malice: "You can't pass here, the place is packed," or "Mind where you step, you will tread on people."

He walked about looking for someone. He suddenly said to himself that he was looking for the nun in the velvet cap, and he smiled in the darkness.

One night he was standing by the convent refectory. The felt-covered door kept banging, letting out a warm wave of polluted air: the French wounded lay in the refectory.

A tall nun glided past him like a rustling tower. He bowed.

"Why are you standing here, my dear? What are you waiting for?" the nun said softly. "Aren't you well? I would gladly let you in, but we have no

room: the enemy has occupied everything, tables and benches. They are the enemy, but they are in pain just the same—they, too, are men."

"No, I don't want to go into the refectory. I can stay here. . . . I should like to see one of the nuns. I want to say good-bye to her, Mother. She is the merchant Korobeyev's daughter, and her name is Parasha."

"Oh, yes, I know Parasha the orphan—she is a novice, not a nun. Stay here, and if I find her I'll send her to you."

He waited for some time, but no one came. "And what do I want her for?" he thought. "It's just a fancy," and he shook his head as though throwing off a spell.

It was quite dark when he came out into the Devitchy Field. The cupolas of St. Savva and the Burning Bush were wreathed in damp vapour. The mad priest was standing by a wall. There were no people round him this time, and he shook his menacing finger into the mist in silence. His wife, bareheaded, crouched behind him. Her head was bent, and her damp coat rose and fell evenly on her breast: the baby was sleeping there. Koshelev understood that she too was asleep.

In the middle of the night he entered the convent church of Our Lady of Guidance. A candle was burning there, and he walked towards it.

His footsteps sounded so loud under the dark vaults that he walked on tiptoe. The oblong sarcophagi of the Tsaritas and their daughters stretched like a row of shadows, with the candle of Our Lady glimmering in the distance. On the flagstones between the tombs men were lying on straw, covered with their overcoats. Everyone had a tin mug standing by him.

The feverish groans, the delirious murmuring, and the flickering candlelight made Koshelev turn back. He had passed the tombs of Tsaritsa Evdokia and Tsarevna Sofya when a nun noiselessly appeared before him. A white face with white lips and colourless eyes—an old woman's face—emerged out of the darkness. The nun was shielding the candle flame with her shaking hand, and the red rays filtered between her knotty fingers.

"What are you looking for, my good sir?" the old woman mumbled. "It's hard to find anyone here. The soldiers are all lying side by side, and God only knows which are ours and which the enemy's. . . . I am in charge of the bad cases. They are dying fast, my dear."

"I am sorry; I am not looking for anyone," said Koshelev, moving away.

At that moment a voice called to him, speaking low and with difficulty.

"Is that you, your honour?"

Koshelev started. "Yes."

"Bend down to me, your honour."

The nun fixed a taper to the floor.

"There, you have found him, my dear," she mumbled, disappearing noiselessly in the darkness.

In the dim, uncertain light Koshelev saw the deserter, Rodion, whom he had met at the pot-house.

His grey hair was scattered over his coat, which was rolled up by way of a pillow. Koshelev recognised the thin face, the sharp bristly chin, and the three lines across the bald forehead over the sunken eyes.

"You are a grenadier, aren't you?" he asked, bending down to the soldier.

The man's breath was hot and dry. He lay like an emaciated corpse in a dark uniform with broken brass buttons; his shako, worn and shabby, stood like a bucket near his head. The peak was broken, and the brass eagle that shone in the candlelight hung by one wing only. A tin mug stood on the shako.

"This is a strange meeting, Rodion! . . . Have you been here long?"

"I d-don't know how long," the soldier answered, stammering. "The pot-house caught fire and I came out. . . . I made my way here with the dog."

"The dog, too? . . . "

"Thank God, a nun has taken the dog and promised to look after it. . . . I saw you come in, your

honour, and so I called you. . . . I drove you away from that pot-house—forgive me, your honour. I kept thinking I ought not to have done it."

"That's all right, Rodion. . . ."

"Yes, forgive me if you can. . . ."

"Why, bless you, I never even thought of it." Koshelev fumbled for the grenadier's bony hand and pressed it. "How hot you are! Would you like some water?"

"No, thank you."

The old man was silent, but soon Koshelev heard a sound of weeping. Bright tears were running down the soldier's wrinkled cheeks. Koshelev stroked the old man's hair.

"Come, cheer up! . . ."

Rodion raised himself on his elbow; he was not stammering any more.

"I am dying, and there is no one near me. . . . My friends are all with the regiment. . . . Yesterday a Russian musketeer died next to me. . . . But I must not die. I have a secret task, a vow that can't be broken. . . . Who is in Moscow now, your honour—the enemy?"

"Yes."

"Of course, they've conquered Russia. . . . And, you know, that musketeer told me that Bonaparte is a brother to Emperor Paul, a son of the Empress Catherine, and that he has come to free the Russian

State from his brother's murderers and to bring it law and justice."

"Nonsense, Rodion, your musketeer was raving. . . . Bonaparte is a French rebel—how can he be the Emperor Paul's brother? . . . "

"It's a pity. . . ." Rodion sank on the straw. "It's a pity if it isn't so. . . . I had believed it. If it had been true, there would have been peace, and a true Emperor would have been on the throne once more."

"That's no way to talk of the Tsar's enemy! . . ."

"I know what I am saying. You have killed the true Tsar Paul and destroyed law and justice, so Russia must perish. . . . It is said: 'Vengeance is Mine and I will repay.' And He will repay."

"God knows I did not kill the Tsar."

"You had a hand in it, among the rest. . . . You were in the Palace. I remember you all. Had not Count Pahlen turned our drummer back, we should have come into the Palace and put all you puppies, you wretched officers, and all the gentry, to the bayonet. . . . We should have killed you, yes. The Tsar was murdered and you are all murderers. . . . There was rebellion in the Palace that night, and it was all your doing."

"It is not for you to judge me, and you shouldn't do so. I am not a murderer, I tell you before God, and I shall say it at the Last Judgment. . . . But

I did think, sinner that I am, that when Paul was dethroned a new light would dawn for Russia, and truth and holiness would reign in it. I thought that freedom from tyranny and liberation of the serfs would bring her happiness. . . . It was not rebellion I wanted, but justice and right. . . . Is it not right to banish darkness from one's country and to free it from the yoke? There should be no evil or darkness or slavery or ignorance in the Fatherland, but the light of truth, true freedom, and holiness. . . ."

Rodion slowly raised himself on his elbow as he listened, then sank back on his bed again.

"I see what you are after. But was it right to kill the Tsar?"

"No, it wasn't."

"Yet he was killed. Where is that righteousness you talk of?"

"I don't know. I only know that Russia is no happier because Paul was murdered. There was nothing right in that. Righteousness is within us, in our inmost heart."

"That's a good saying." The grenadier's hot palm rested on Koshelev's hand. "Those are true words. May God forgive you! Since you are that sort of man, I will tell you something. Listen. Two of my fellow-soldiers who know my secret are Corporal Mihailo Perekrestov, a young man, and

Corporal Akim Govoruhin. When you find them, tell them that Rodion died in Moscow, and that the dog was with him to the last."

"The dog?"

"I am telling you my secret. . . . I have this dog, the one you tried to catch in the Palace. . . . The white one—don't you remember?"

"No, I don't. . . . White one? . . . Wait a bit. . . . No, I don't remember."

"I have the Emperor Paul's dog. I carried it out of the Palace inside my coat. And when it disappeared from the barracks I left my regiment and went to look for it. . . . I wandered about Petersburg for five days. At last a corndealer in the Hay Market told me that some gypsies had been trying to sell a horse stolen from the Imperial stables, and that with the horse there was a dog—white, with thin legs and a pointed head. She had run up to the horse and settled beside it. And so the gypsies had walked off with the horse and the dog. The corndealer showed me which way they went. . . . I hired a cart and caught them up at Valdai. The horse was led on a rope, and the Tsar's dog, grimy and dusty, walked beside it. I gave them my military boots and overcoat for the dog—the wretches guessed how badly I wanted it. Then the sentries at Valdai arrested me. I was flogged, of course, as a deserter. The dog followed me on the march and we've been

under fire together. . . . Grenadiers Mihailo Perekrestov and Akim Govoruhin know about it. The dog was in my charge and now I am dying. . . . Take care of the dog, your honour, and give it to my comrades—it's with one of the nuns here called Paraskeva."

"Parasha!" Koshelev thought joyfully. "So my little nun is here!"

"For the sake of Jesus Christ, our God, give me your word to take care of the dog, and to hand it to my comrades. . . . Make the sign of the Cross before Our Lady."

"I will." Koshelev crossed himself with a smile. "I'll take care of it and give it to your comrades."

"You are a good man, God bless you," the soldier said contentedly, and sinking back on his bed seemed to drop asleep.

Koshelev stood up.

"God willing, all will be well with you yet. Recover, and I will come to see you. . . ."

He blew out the candle and walked on tiptoe past the tombs. He heard once more the feverish moans and delirious murmurs of the sleepers.

At one of the side chapels he saw a nun straightening the black kerchief on her head. She stood with her back to him, and Koshelev noticed her fair hair gathered in a knot over the nape of her neck. He recognised the hair, and said, as he bowed to her:

"Good evening. I have found you at last."

The nun picked up a taper and turned round. Her face was lighted from below and her eyes were deep and shining.

"Good evening." She bowed down to her waist. "It's you. . . . I, too, have been looking for you in the convent, but you weren't there. Thank you for having helped me in my sorrow."

Her face stood out of the darkness like a pure and mysterious image of the Immaculate Virgin.

"I have been looking for you to say good-bye. I want to leave Moscow and return to the army."

"God help you. It will be difficult."

"Good-bye, then, Paraskeva——" Koshelev forgot what the girl's patronymic was.

"Savvishna," she reminded him softly.

"Good-bye, Paraskeva Savvishna. Shall we meet again?"

"God willing, we shall. But you haven't told me your name.

"Pyotr Grigoryevitch Koshelev, Captain of the Guards."

"Good luck to you, Pyotr Grigoryvitch."

They were silent as they looked at each other. Koshelev suddenly longed to kneel before her and ask her blessing. "What an idea!" he thought.

"So you are attending to the sick?" he asked.

"No, Mother Antonina is attending to them, and

I relieve her. . . . But there is no help against death. Oh, how they die! . . ."

"There's a soldier lying here in a fever, a grenadier of our regiment. He has a dog."

"I know. They were going to send the dog away, but I have persuaded the Mother Superior to let it stay: the soldier was so unhappy about it, it was pitiful to see. I keep it in Mother Evgenia's little lobby. . . . And the other day the Mother and I washed your foundling in the tub. She doesn't know how to handle babies, but I do."

"Thank you," Koshelev said, and added, "Thank you, kind one. . . . And I will ask you to look after the old soldier and his dog, too."

"Have no fear, Pyotr Grigoryevitch. I have promised."

"Good-bye, then, till we meet."

The girl straightened the melting wax of the taper with her delicate fingers.

"Are you going away to-day, Pyotr Grigoryevitch?"

"No, I shall be here another couple of days: the coachmaker is going to find out about the route for me. I am a stranger here, you know."

"Are you staying in the convent?"

"Yes, at the gate, with the beggars. . . . Right under the ikon where the candles are burning."

"Then I'll come and see you."

They bowed to each other, and the nun walked away. The light flame of her taper fluttered farther and farther away in the muttering darkness.

When Koshelev came out of the church his face was bathed in the cool freshness of the night. The silvery trail of the comet over the dark cupolas, the branches of the trees hardly stirred by the cold breeze—all seemed to him significant, beautiful, and mysterious.

"It's beginning," Koshelev thought, and crossed himself.

XX

On the morning of September 20th, the Marshals were summoned to the Kremlin. They arrived early, bringing with them a breath of outside air and the mud of the roads. They were coughing and sneezing, and the spurs of their heavy boots clanked in the Palace halls.

Marshal Davout had a bad cold and kept wrapping his silk scarf round his neck. Marshal Ney, a plain, rough-looking man, thin and sharp like a skeleton in his blue cloak with brass buttons, stood apart from the others. Murat was listening to Bessière by the window, smiling and shaking his head. He was chewing something, and his red lips, curly black hair and whiskers looked shiny in the sunlight.

His absent-minded smile showed that he was not listening to the Duke of Istria.

The Emperor kept them waiting. Ney struck a light and lit his pipe of coarse soldiers' tobacco. Then many of the others took cigars out of their waistcoat pockets, and tobacco smoke filled the room with a cold mist.

Napoleon came in, wearing a grey coat and a small black three-cornered hat. He bowed without taking it off, handed a piece of paper to Prince Eugene, and said quickly:

"This is my decision, read it."

It was an order of offensive: "To burn what remains of Moscow and march on Tver and Petersburg." The further Prince Eugene read, the colder and more surprised his voice sounded. He folded the piece of paper and passed it to his neighbour. It could be heard rustling in the stillness. No one was looking at the Emperor; the Marshals stood hanging their heads as though they felt ashamed for him. The long silence was beginning to be awkward.

Ney thrust out his thin arm from under his cloak, and suddenly said with a decisive gesture:

"It's too late."

Then all began speaking at once. Murat laughed a forced, contemptuous laugh, shrugging his shoulders; it was too late, it was stupid to think of an offensive now; but when he had begged to be given

the Horse Guards, promising to finish off at one blow the Russians who were retreating from Moscow in disorder across the river, no one would listen to him. Bending his bald head, Davout was gently insisting that they ought to leave Moscow and march on Tula and Kaluga, fighting their way to the heart of Russia—the Ukraine.

Cutting the air with his flat hand, Ney glanced angrily at the Emperor, the Marshals, and the smoky room: they ought to leave Moscow and Russia at once, and go back by the old road to Smolensk as fast as they could, escaping—yes, escaping—from the winter, famine, and destruction.

Ney finished speaking, and hiding his arm under his blue cloak straightened his back.

Then all turned their heads to the Emperor. Perplexity and regret could be seen in many eyes. Advance now, on the eve of winter, after the fire, when everything was in disorder! Where were they to go? No, it was too late; everyone was longing for peace; it was enough.

They were all looking at him in silence, with a cold interest, as though they saw for the first time his middle-aged yellowish face.

The Emperor turned round sharply and left the room.

The hand of the clock advanced in the same direction as on that first day in Moscow—towards peace.

Wintering in Moscow—offensive—retreat—peace: the hand had moved full circle and stopped at peace.

That same day the Emperor sent for Colencour, the Duke of Vicenza.

This tall man, who received all the Emperor's favours with such cold politeness, always seemed alien to him. He felt that Colencour looked at all his work from outside, like an indifferent spectator watching a gorgeous pageant. But he decided to send him, because he would be well remembered in Petersburg.

The duke stood at the white door, respectfully bending his head. Napoleon did not like very tall men too near him.

"You know that I have decided to march on Petersburg . . . "

The Emperor was examining his nails. He heard a false note in his own voice as he spoke.

"Of course, I shall take Petersburg and demolish it. I will stop at nothing. In her despair Russia may rise against the Emperor Alexander. I intend to send you to him. Warn him that a catastrophe threatens him. I do not want to destroy him and his Empire. . . ."

Colencour was coldly watching Napoleon's smallest movements: the way he rubbed his hands, the reflection of his back in the mirror, showing a pleat in his grey coat. He heard the false, hurried note in his voice.

"No, Your Majesty, I beg to be excused such a mission," he said, clenching his teeth for fear of betraying by his voice and look his sudden feeling of vindictive joy. Then he went on simply and firmly, resting his chin on his collar embroidered with golden oak leaves:

"I will not go, Your Majesty. It would be useless. The Emperor Alexander will accept no offers. He will fight to the last soldier, to the last peasant. You know that as well as I do. He is only beginning to fight. . . . He will simply refuse to see me. It's useless my going, Your Majesty. . . . There is only one way out, for you and for all of us—retreat."

The Emperor looked closely at his dark-skinned hands, and suddenly raised his grey, shining eyes:

"Oh, very well . . . then I will send Loriston."

The wave of radiant light from his eyes, and the way he said "Very well," sent a pang of pity and anxiety to Colencour's heart.

This short man with the heavy, yellowish face, this "little corporal of the Revolution," was once more a majestic, beautiful Cæsar.

Had he said another word, or put his hand on his shoulder, Colencour would have fallen on his knees, begging him to go, to run, to save his eagles and his Empire from the Russian abyss into which destiny had plunged him.

Napoleon turned to the table and rummaged

among the papers on it. Colencour bowed low and walked out, his face white with emotion.

Loriston was called in next. Napoleon's hands were warm and soft when he rested them on Loriston's shoulders. There was a gentle, almost feminine note in his voice.

"Loriston, you must go. . . . I want peace—I need it. . . . You understand—peace."

Loriston set out for the Russian outposts.

XXI

During the clear days of September the French in Moscow grew active and lively as though they had shaken off all traces of the fire.

Horses neighed and soldiers swore cheerfully in the Vassily Blazhenny Cathedral. There were stables in the Uspensky Cathedral too. Scales had been fixed there, and the stove by the altar was used for melting metal. The cathedral candelabra, weighing many pounds, had already been melted into lumps of silver.

Half-starved cattle were driven across the city to the army slaughter-houses. Horses were neighing at the Holy Trinity and St. Kozma and Damian Churches; they stood in the altar recess, covered with the priests' vestments.

The Emperor's stables were in the Kremlin, in the

Churches of St. Saviour-in-the-Forest and St. Nicolas. Stacks of hay were piled in the semi-darkness by the altar, where partitions had been made of fresh planks. The shining backs of English mares were covered with green nets.

Through a mist of yellowish smoke the sun looked like a silver rouble; the air re-echoed with thousands of voices talking every European language, the tramping of feet, the neighing of horses, and the clank of arms. Moscow seemed to have turned into one big stable from which a huge stallion greeted with its neighing the cool September sun.

The army moved among the ruins, changing its quarters. Chalk marks on the grimy walls showed where the different regiments and their staffs were billeted; churches were used as stables, depots, and barracks. Soldiers occupied new lodgings, and the ruins became once more human habitations, with pegs stuck into the bricks, knapsacks and ammunition hanging on the walls.

In the doorway of a yellow church, which the fire had marked with purplish stripes like bruises, a French soldier in a red fez with a tassel stood smoking a long pipe, his arms crossed on his chest. The church was used as a storehouse for coffee and rice. The Frenchman hummed a song as he lightly jingled his spurs. Moscow urchins—like little wild animals in rags—crowded by the wall. The Frenchman

shooed them away, making dreadful eyes at them; but as soon as the short-sighted superintendent had crossed the street, examining the receipt-book through his spectacles, the man called the children back, grumbling angrily, and putting a handful of dry, dusty rice with mouse droppings in it into every grimy little paw, and dismissed each child with a slight cuff on the head.

Soldiers' shirts and green trousers with yellow braid were drying on poles stuck out of the windows of a charred house, the wrought-iron gates of which had fallen into the grass. The trousers flapped gaily in the wind, the muddy water ran down the twisted braid. The house was used as a regimental laundry, and the soldiers, calling cheerfully to one another, were washing their rags in the yard for the first time since Smolensk.

A cavalry soldier wearing nothing but his shirt was fashioning a board to serve as a table top. The board had been found in a church—it was an old ikon of Our Lady with the Infant Christ. The man was fixing the ikon to a stump of wood. The brown lacquer cracked and dropped off; it would be a fine table, and a chessboard could be scratched on the top of it with a sword blade.

A fair-haired soldier, probably an Alsatian, his shirt-sleeves rolled up above the elbows and his legs, in spurred boots, wide apart, was wringing out a

heap of wet clothes over another ikon board as he sang something about Mother Michel who lost her cat.

The sky was blue and transparent with the shimmering light of autumn, and in the soft radiance the faces seemed finer and more beautiful. It was as though the sky had veiled with a bluish mist the shakos, the bronze guns, and the Roman eagles, and was itself captivated by the beauty of the great military panorama. There was a blue sheen on the very ashes of the ruins. The Guards were marching somewhere like airy phantoms, and their white gaiters and waistcoats gleamed in the sun.

The soldiers were saying that the campaign was over, that the Emperor had decided to offer the Russians peace, and of course they would agree.

At sunset flocks of feathery clouds, fiery red round the edges, met over the Kremlin—clouds that promised wind. The sound of a solitary bell floated from beyond the river; it was the bell of St. Peter and St. Paul's, where vespers were sung for the Slovaks, Orthodox soldiers of the Grand Army. There was something restful in the distant sound.

On September 23rd Loriston returned from the Russian outposts, bringing truce, as was expected.

Marshals, generals, army staffs, and the Emperor's suite assembled in the Kremlin halls. Napoleon appeared at one end of the room, wearing a blue, white-

breasted uniform. He walked, hatless, along the swaying ranks, congratulating them all on the truce. Peace was a matter of a few days. The campaign was over.

In the evening an unexpectedly early snow fell softly and slowly over the black wastes. The charred ruins turned damp, and a stench rose from them. In the night there was the first frost. The half-starved horses looked like white ghosts in the whirling snow. The soldiers lay quietly in the streets under the open sky.

In Moscow they still had sugar, coffee, and hot wine, but at the outposts horses were being killed for food. They had no salt there, and put gunpowder in the horseflesh soup; the powder flared blue in the cauldrons and floated to the surface in greasy spots.

The burnt-out villages, the overturned carts, carcasses of horses, and heaps of manure were all white with snow. After the truce the Russians were quiet; they seemed to have vanished in the lilac mist.

Cavalry soldiers, who had gone out foraging in the evening, brought back a Russian prisoner. He was a soldier of the Guards, deadly pale, with a shaven head. He had been found in a bath-house at the end of a deserted village. He lay stretched out on a bench under his grey overcoat, and would have

been taken for a corpse had he not stirred when somebody kicked him; he did not seem to be wounded, but perhaps he was ill. He was Corporal Illarion, the grenadier singer, nicknamed "The Flint" by Suvorov himself. The Flint had fallen out of the ranks and lain down to die in a village bath-house.

They brought the Russian Guardsman to the camp-fires. He walked with an even tread between the escort, pressing his crumpled overcoat to his stomach. The Frenchmen laughed at this shaven soldier, who looked like a Venus of Tartary.

They patted him cheerily on the shoulder, brought him a drink of hot wine, thrust their worn copper flasks into his hands, but the prisoner sat without moving. In the night someone threw a horsecloth near his bare feet; he did not touch it.

At daybreak one of the soldiers got up, shaking with cold, to throw a few more planks on the dying fire. He pushed the prisoner; the man rolled over on one side and his overcoat slipped off, showing bluish flesh and a heap of loose intestines. The Russian whom they had found in the cold bath-house had been wounded in the stomach—that was why he had pressed his overcoat to his body with both hands, like the Venus of Medici. He passed away in the night.

XXII

Shortly after midnight the coachmaker stepped over a wheelbarrow with a deformed beggar in it and over a blind man who slept with his face on the ground.

"Wake up, sir, wake up!" he called Koshelev, who dozed crouching against the convent wall.

"I am not asleep."

"Where are you?" Yevstigney pulled him by the arm. "The Tsar Alexander is dead. . . ."

"No!" cried Koshelev, with a start.

"Yes, he is. Some prisoners have been brought in to-night, and they said so. . . . There's rebellion in Petersburg. The villains have entered it. . . . It's on fire. . . . Our army has surrendered. The Emperor Alexander is dead."

"No, no! Who told you? It can't be so."

"The people in the Field are all saying so. He is dead. . . ."

The crowd in the dark Field by the convent was all astir. Koshelev could not see the faces, but there were murmurs all round him as the people moved to and fro.

"The Winter Palace is on fire . . ." a young voice breaking with fear was saying. "Petersburg has been taken by assault, Macdonald has come in . . . I tell you what I have heard myself. . . . Macdon-

ald fought his way through the fire. . . . Our troops are drawn up in the Square. A soldier of theirs has killed the Tsar. He crept up to him wearing a Russian overcoat, with a knife hidden under it. The Tsar is dead. Our army has surrendered."

A bony woman got up from her box, struck herself on the breast, and set up a piercing wail.

"Be quiet!" someone shouted, and kneeling close to Koshelev wailed also in a high-pitched terrible voice:

"They killed him!"

The crowd swung back and started to run.

Everywhere in the Field people were running in the dark, stumbling against one another. The French were sitting by their camp-fires. Many of them walked up to the Russians, buttoning their uniforms on the way. The soldiers were annoyed at this night alarm; they drove the crowd farther down the Field with the butt-ends of their muskets and their strap buckles. The Russians turned their grey faces to them, seeming not to feel the blows. The dark Field was filled with subdued moaning as though a huge funeral were going on there.

And when the cold dawn rose low over the plain, Koshelev saw that all the people were on their knees, the bearded faces lifted towards the East. An old man in spectacles looking like a merchant stood in

front of the crowd reading in a stern voice the prayers for the dead. Koshelev could not hear the words, but he, too, knelt down.

The coachmaker helped him to get up, and hand in hand they walked down the Field.

In the morning twilight people were standing everywhere in groups wreathed in vapour.

A footman in a green, gold-braided livery, stamping his bare feet to get warm, was shouting angrily and incoherently:

"They are in Petersburg, and the merchants had said we should be relieved on Thursday! They think nothing of cheating honest folk, the skinflints. . . . Relieved, indeed! . . . The generals have surrendered with their regiments—they are Germans, of course—it's they who killed the Tsar. All is lost, the artillery and the Guards are done for. We have to swear allegiance to Bonaparte now, and then he will set the serfs free. . . . But meanwhile he takes our boots, the wretch. . . . The gentry and all those generals have abandoned the people and run away, and it was all lies that Count Rastopchin told us. . . . Bonaparte will catch him, you'll see. . . . He is to set us free, but now he says 'Off with your boots,' the rascal."

Sick with horror, Koshelev glanced around him as though a different sky and a different field were before him. "So that's how it is!" he thought.

"It's quite true what he says," a respectable-looking artisan in a long black coat said to Koshelev. "We are not our own masters, anyway—it makes no difference to us who is Emperor. . . . If one lot of them goes, the other will fleece us just the same—it's all one to us."

Koshelev turned away from the artisan. He did not see where he was going. The dark Field, the black crowds of people seemed to him dead and terrible—burnt out; the whole of Russia was burnt out like that Field, and the noisy crows were flocking over its corpse.

"No, no," he muttered, and set off at a run.

Other people too were running aimlessly, knocking themselves against him or overtaking him. Against the pale background of the dawn three men were seen walking towards the Field.

They each carried a cane and had a red ribbon across the shoulder, and one of them had a white belt. As they approached, many of the people took off their caps, and all made way for them, looking doubtfully at their canes and red ribbons.

They were members of the Moscow Urban Council, who had come at dawn to have a look at the refugees from the fire. The council consisted of three Russian citizens who, after long persuasion, had agreed to serve on it—the merchants Nahodkin and Korobov and a court-councillor, Bestuzhev-Ryumin.

They were followed by a newly appointed police commissar with a pail and a batch of posters hanging over the sleeve of his blue coat. These commissars were recruited from gentlemen's lackeys and the foreign half-gentry of the Kuznetsky. The commissar in the blue coat was smearing the walls with liquid paste and sticking up big posters with a "Proclamation to the Inhabitants of Moscow."

The merchant Korobov, a tall, thin pock-marked man with a red cotton sash across his breast, strode on in front of the others. He often took off his cap and bowed on either side, smiling anxiously:

"We are your own sort, good Christians. . . . We are no traitors. . . . We merely want to count up the people who have been burnt out, and see what can be done. . . ."

The court-councillor, Bestuzhev-Ryumin, a fair man with protruding, short-sighted eyes, walked behind him in a worn cloth coat and patent top-boots. As though perplexed with something, he kept scratching his unshaven cheek as he pulled his reed cane out of the mud.

The merchant Nahodkin, a little old man in tin-rimmed spectacles, a neat sheepskin coat tied with a white towel, and a velvet cap with a long peak, walked with tiny steps with his eyes on the ground.

The crowd sullenly made way for them. The commissar smeared the wall of St. Savva's and pressed

with his palm on the poster, squeezing the paste from under it. The tall, lanky Korobov took off his cap:

"Good Christians, we are your own people, we are here because of the fire. . . . They tied these red bands round us, but we are no traitors. . . ."

Koshelev went up to the wall where a broad sheet of the Proclamation showed white:

"CITIZENS OF MOSCOW

"Your misfortunes are cruel, but His Majesty the Emperor wishes to put a stop to them.

"Terrible examples have taught you how he punishes crime and disobedience.

"Stern measures have been taken to suppress disorder and to restore general safety.

"Your Municipal and Urban Council—a fatherly administration elected from among yourselves—will take care of you and look after your needs and your welfare.

"LESSEPS.

"Governor of the city and province of Moscow."

Someone pulled Koshelev away from the poster by the sleeve of his sheepskin. The commissar in the blue coat tapped the poster with his palm. Koshelev recognised him: he was the fair-haired serf, Larka, who had robbed him of his turquoise locket that night at the pot-house.

"That's done," Larka said to the lanky merchant. "Let's go on, shall we?"

The three walked off, leaning on their canes; the crowd followed them.

Only an old man in a brocaded night-cap trimmed with hareskin stopped to read the Proclamation, holding on to the corner of the poster. He put his face to the wall like a Jew at prayer.

Koshelev walked on aimlessly, muttering that there was no Russia left, that Bonaparte was his Emperor.

The wind was howling among the charred walls in the burnt-out streets. A peasant in a tucked-up coat was threading his way among the ruins, holding his cap in his hand, ready to bow to the first enemy soldier, to the first man on horseback he chanced to meet. So this was what Russia had come to!

French soldiers were dragging a young peasant woman down the street. Her head-dress had slipped off, her jacket was unbuttoned, and her breasts were hanging over her shift. The soldiers laughed; some of them were holding her arms and others following closely behind. The woman did not struggle but screamed gaily and stupidly. So this was what Russia had come to!

The coachmaker walked up to Koshelev with his even step.

"They've got her. . . . They made her drunk."

"Leave me alone," Koshelev turned to him with hatred. "Go away. . . . Go, I tell you!"

"Oh, why are you so angry, sir?"

"Go," Koshelev buried his face in his dirty hands. "Go, take your oath to Bonaparte, serve him . . . since there is no Russia left. . . . But I won't. I'll go by myself, killing every soldier, every horse of theirs. . . ."

"What are you saying?" The coachmaker grinned. "No need for you to go alone—we'll go together."

XXIII

Before Napoleon entered Moscow, all the nobility, high officials, and everyone who had carriages, servants, and horses had left the city. But although Government offices and institutions had been removed, and hundreds of the gentry had gone, Moscow was by no means empty.

Not merely the convicts and lunatics let loose by Rastopchin had remained, but also all the lower-class people—artisans, serfs, workmen, over ten thousand wounded soldiers, priests, and merchants burdened with large families—in fact, all the democratic population that had no horses and servants to carry away their belongings. It was about them that Rastopchin had said at Fili, on August 29th, to the Commander-in-Chief and Yermolov, that "only forty or fifty thousand of the poorest inhabitants

remain in Moscow"; adding, that "if we abandon Moscow without a battle we shall see it in flames behind us."

There were doctors, teachers, clerical students, commissariat clerks, actors, musicians, printers, left in Moscow.

These people were hiding now in waste places and charred gardens.

The Orphanage soon began sending clerks out to the outlying villages, accompanied by Doctor Mshtcherovsky, Court-councillor Danilevsky, and Collegiate Registrar Zveryev, with an appeal to "save more than a thousand luckless children lest they die of starvation."

The people who survived the fire and had not been shot or murdered were starving. They no longer dug potatoes in the devastated kitchen-gardens, and at nights they shivered with cold in their shanties or under a cover of sacking.

Polyakov, who played violin solos at the Moscow theatre, and Tatarinov, a 'cellist at the same theatre, had both remained in Moscow. They lived, one above the other, in Pevchy Street. Polyakov had rescued from the fire his family, boxes, and bundles, and Tatarinov had saved nothing but his 'cello.

Barefoot and dressed in only his night-shirt, Tatarinov walked into the Devitchy Field carrying the black 'cello-case. People who by now looked

at everything with indifference followed with attentive eyes this short, bald-headed man with narrow whiskers on his soot-covered face. His wet, ragged night-shirt, burnt in many places, flapped against his calves.

Polyakov, the violinist, was tying to a pole a ragged blanket that the wind blew down every night. Tatarinov walked up to him and sat down on a basket, putting his 'cello between his legs. Polyakov looked round sullenly—everyone looked sullen in those days.

"Is that you, Tatarov? So you're alive. . . . You've been burnt out, brother, I see. It's a bad lookout; we too have nothing to wear . . . wait a bit, though."

The violinist crawled under the wet blanket and began whispering. His wife, in a soldier's overcoat, her bonnet soaked with rain, peeped out from under the blanket and smiled a pale smile of welcome to their friend. But Tatarinov sat gazing into the distance.

The violinist gave him his wife's dressing-gown—a damp, cotton garment, transparent with age.

"Here, brother, cover yourself with this."

Tatarinov did not move or touch the dressing-gown. Polyakov wrapped it round him.

"There, take it, never mind—it's a covering, any-

way. And where are your people—Anna Nikolaevna, your mother, and Petrusha?"

Tatarinov looked at Polyakov for a moment with his clear eyes.

"I don't know where they are. The fire parted us. I keep looking for them, but they aren't here. I hope all the time to see somebody carrying my Petrusha. But no: the women have their own children, and mine isn't here. There is no Petrusha. . . ."

"Oh, my dear! . . . Why . . ." Polyakov looked at his friend with fear and pity.

And so Tatarinov remained sitting on the violinist's basket, with the dressing-gown round his shoulders. Polyakov wanted the basket—it was filled with rags that would have done well for the baby's napkins—but he did not disturb his friend or talk to him. And if it had not been for an occasional cup of hot water or a saucerful of greasy soup that he gave to Tatarinov, the snub-nosed 'cellist would have remained without food or drink, sitting on that basket and gazing into the far distance.

Bonaparte's commissars had been walking about the Field for two days, calling out musicians for His Majesty's orchestra.

On the third day Polyakov stood up, and pulling down his coat said sullenly to the commissars:

"Well, I am a musician and so is he. Both from the Moscow theatre."

The gay, curly-headed foreigner—a shop assistant from a French wine-store—smiled, showing his white teeth, wrote down their names, and asked them to come to the theatre which was to open in Moscow that day. He promised them rations from the Army Commissariat, clothes, and of course lodgings.

"I'll go," said Polyakov, sitting down on the basket beside Tatarinov. The commissars had gone away.

"I shall certainly go. One must eat. It's no use rotting here in the wet and the mud, with Lizaveta and baby. . . . I'll go. It's all one to me. All is lost. I'll go and play to Bonaparte. . . . I don't care."

Polyakov's wife began to cry. They whispered together behind the torn blanket. Then he came out, banging against the posts and grumbling:

"Damn it, I'm sick of it. . . . Damn everything, I say; I don't care. Here's a patriot for you, if you please! A Roman matron—Mother of the Gracchi! . . . I can't bear to see her and the baby perishing, and she blames me. . . . Russia . . . I am no traitor to Russia. . . . But Bonaparte may stay in Moscow for ever—that, of course, does not enter her head. And perhaps there is no Russia left—phew! A cow has licked it off with its

tongue. . . . Russia, indeed! The Empire! Damnation take it. . . ."

XXIV

The musicians came to the theatre in the evening, when in the silence of the city the clock in the Spassky tower struck the hour deeply and sonorously.

By order of the Great Tsar of Moscow, Mihail Fyodorovitch Romanov, that clock had been made cleverly and secretly by a foreign master, Christopher Holloway, who put into its chime, so people said, the call of the night watchmen, the singing of arrows, the voices of men dead and gone. When night descended upon Moscow, the first voice, by the Uspensky Cathedral, began, "Holy Mother of God, save us"; then followed the second, the third, and the fourth, calling upon all the Saints of Moscow. The fifth voice called, "Glorious is the city of Moscow," and after it, many voices called, "Glorious is the city of Kiev," "Glorious is the city of Suzdal, Rostov, Yaroslavl, Smolensk, and all the other cities of the Tsardom of Moscow."

The voices called by name all the cities of the Russian land, and then the first voice began again at the Uspensky Cathedral: "Holy Mother of God, save us."

The musicians walked along the black ruins that looked like the ribs or tusks of some huge skeleton.

The ashes that they raised with their feet made them cough. The windows of Pozdniakov's house that Marshal Mortier, the Governor-General of Moscow, had turned into a theatre, gleamed in the distance like an eye that now opened wide and now half closed. The house was brilliantly lighted with church candles.

Tatarinov suddenly leant against his friend's shoulder and whispered:

"There's someone moaning . . . "

Polyakov glanced warily into the darkness. Indeed, a hardly audible, miserable moan came from a waste piece of ground.

The French generals' carriages were already standing in the Nikitskaya. The light from the half-circular windows fell on the heavy Viennese coaches, on the coal-black pavement, and the big tubs of water guarded by sentries. The glass doors kept banging; officers and soldiers crowded in, shaking their cloaks. Steam came from within as from a bath-house.

A written poster showed white under a lantern by the gates; it announced, "The Game of Love and Chance," "Cide and Zaira," "Mischief in Prison."

For their dresses, the actors had been given pieces of black velvet with silver crosses on them from the vestry of Ivan Veliki, and surplices of pale green

brocade. In their silver-embroidered velvet and brocade they looked like some fairy courtiers of the ancient kings of France.

The sisters Lamiral, in gorgeous sarafans and light green, silver-embroidered head-dresses, danced the graceful Russian dance. This dance—slow, chaste, and seductive—pleased the audience best. There was enthusiastic applause, many people stood up on their chairs, others crowded round the stage demanding an *encore*.

The sisters, who were very much alike, looked at each other, breathless and joyful, and with a jerk of their slender shoulders, began clapping their hands once more; the orchestra played the dance again, and the cool strains of music floated through the stuffy room.

Bundles of church candles were blazing in their holders of polished glass. The wall-paper was moist with the heat of their flames and the people's breathing; the candles, melting rapidly, dropped hot wax on the heads and uniforms of those who sat near the walls. Hot and perspiring generals, officers, the soldiers sat shoulder to shoulder, hardly able to breathe for heat.

In the orchestra, a soldier's trumpet kept poking Polyakov in the back. The stuffiness made him feel sick, his violin was covered with vapour. On the narrow strip of the stage, at the level of his head, he

saw Madame André's white stockings, with two dark spots on the ankles, flit to and fro. Madame André, a thin little woman in a velvet biretta with brocade crosses, was marching up and down the stage with the old actor, Sanvé, who wore a yellow waistcoat made of a priest's vestment. Madame André's gay chirrup grew shriller and shriller. Polyakov did not understand what she said, and that was why, perhaps, he felt pity for her sunken, heavily rouged cheeks and her white stockings with spots on them.

He looked round fearfully at the hall shaken by breathless laughter. Tatarinov sat in the orchestra, tucking up his feet under his high stool. His eyes were dry and bright; the current of air coming from the hall kept blowing his thin hair back. Sometimes his 'cello gave a deep, broken sob. The audience were clapping and stamping.

When the candles were put out, the soldiers from the orchestra climbed over the barrier, brushing people's faces with their rough sleeves, and the crowd moved towards the doors, knocking down the benches and chairs in the darkness. Polyakov covered his violin with a velvet rag, fastened the brass hook of the black case, and touched his comrade on the sleeve. Had he not done this, Tatarinov would have gone on sitting there in the cooling darkness, looking straight in front of him as though expecting someone. . . .

XXV

"Holy Mother of God, save us," chimed the clock in the Spassky tower.

Koshelev and the coachmaker crept along the convent wall. The damp sand rustled under their feet. Yevstigney turned to Koshelev, his face a dim patch of white in the darkness.

"When we have passed Orlov Meadow, we'll come to Maltsev's house. . . . It's an empty house, half ruined. We'll wait behind the wall there. . . . We may chance to see an infidel coming, a soldier of theirs or somebody—they pass that way. If you see several coming, you must hide; but if it's only one, cross yourself and come out. . . . This is what I have been doing at nights, sir. When I see one of them coming, I come out and call to him quietly, '*Allez*,' and signal to him. He stops, and I go on beckoning. . . . Then he comes along, thinking I am going to show him some loot or a woman. I go through the gate, and he follows me. There's a well in the yard; I take him up to it and point down it with my finger, pretending there's a woman hidden there. He bends down to look, and then I seize him by the neck. . . . Will you help me?"

"Yes," Koshelev answered.

The coachmaker pushed him towards a wall.

"Stand here and keep quiet. . . ."

Koshelev made out a lantern overhead. The coachmaker stepped forward and called in a gurgling, drawn-out voice:

"A—le—le—le . . . "

"What, already?" Koshelev thought, trembling.

A man was standing at some distance from them. From his low shako Koshelev knew him for an enemy soldier.

The man turned his head, listening.

"A—le—le—le . . . " the coachmaker cooed.

The man asked something in a perplexed voice. Soon his slow steps grew nearer.

"Make straight for the well," Yevstigney said, and, turning round, called "A—le—le—le . . . "

Koshelev touched the slippery wooden cover of the well. The crane creaked, and a horrible stench of decay rose from the black hole.

The man walked into the yard uncertainly and stopped. Then he saw them, and came towards them with a firm step. They knocked him down and fell upon him. Half strangled, the man brought out:

"Brother . . . Christian . . . Brother . . . Slovak."

Koshelev let him go, the man's head hit against the wooden top of the well, and he began crossing himself with a shaky hand:

"Brother . . . Our Father . . . Which art . . . in heaven . . ."

Koshelev ran away. The coachmaker overtook him in the street. They ran for some time without speaking. Behind them the man was crying frantically at the top of his voice:

"Thy Name . . . Thy Kingdom . . . Thy Will . . . in heaven . . . on earth . . . "

When they reached the convent, Yevstigney turned round:

"We've made a slight mistake," and he laughed a short, neighing laugh. Koshelev recalled the man floundering by the well, and laughed also.

"I was strangling him, and he suddenly called, 'Brother.' . . . A queer thing to happen."

Koshelev felt light-hearted—as though he had been naughty and escaped punishment.

Whispering and laughing, they settled in their usual place under the ikon by the gate. Two or three candles were still burning before it. A nun was walking by the gate, looking about her. Koshelev recognised her and called gaily:

"Paraskeva Savvishna, we are here."

The nun was carrying a jug. The reflection of the candle flames flickered on its rounded side. The brass jingled.

"I was looking for you, Pyotr Grigoryevitch. I came here when I was off duty but couldn't find

you. . . . Here is some bread for you. I've brought a jug of water and a towel—think of all the dirt and the soot. Wash yourself."

"Thank you very much. How kind of you to have thought of it!"

"Good evening to you, Uncle Yevstigney. . . . I didn't see you in the dark. Come and wash."

"Not I! A bear doesn't wash all its life, and yet it's clean."

All three laughed.

"I'll pour out the water for you, Pyotr Grigoryevitch," the girl said.

Koshelev washed himself, splashing about him with relish. He rubbed his face with the towel that smelt of damp freshness and apples.

"That's fine. . . . Do stay with us a little, Paraskeva Savvishna, please."

The brass jug jingled, the girl sat down, and Koshelev saw close to him her pale face that seemed lighted from within. A cool breath touched his cheek.

"And we have nearly killed a man," he said suddenly; and, smiling and hurrying over his words, told her about the Slovak.

"You see, you are glad yourself that nothing happened. . . . Why, you are a soldier, not a murderer."

Both were silent as though they had nothing to say. Koshelev was looking into her face.

"Murderer, you say. . . . But if there's nothing

else left to me? I had a country, and I've lost it; I had a brother, and I've lost him. I was a man once, and what am I now? Perhaps I daren't live any more."

A sudden wave seemed to rise and lift him—he recalled the old man carrying that girl—Sofyushka—out of the fire, her dark plait knocking against the old man's legs. He longed to tell her everything, as though by telling her he would lighten his burden and justify himself.

"I daren't live. . . . I saw them tearing a girl away from her father in order to——"

He blushed in the darkness, not finding a word. The nun said nothing. He whispered:

" . . . to outrage her. I saw it but didn't stir. My brother was burned in the hospital. I didn't try to save him. I've lost everything. . . . I've lost myself. . . . My very soul has been burned. . . . This isn't war, it's worse than war. So I will stalk them at night till they kill us."

The nun moved:

"If one only knew who that girl was . . . "

"I don't know who she was. The servant called her Sofyushka. . . . Zaharyin is her surname, but what Zaharyins they are I don't know. That name will always be a burden on my conscience."

"God willing, the burden shall be lifted. It wasn't your fault, Pyotr Grigoryevitch."

The coachmaker was settling down for the night

and grumbling about the cold as he made a pillow of his tattered velvet waistcoat.

"It wasn't your fault," the girl repeated. "But I believe you have lost heart."

"No, I haven't. . . . Only I don't want to live in a beaten and defiled Russia—in a Russia that is down and out, hiding in the wreckage of the fire, shaking with fear at the sight of a French soldier. . . . Such a Russia is nothing to me. It would be despicable to submit."

"I understand you, but I still think you have lost heart. Listen to me, if you will, and I will tell you. Go away from Moscow. All the gentry have gone, and you should go too. The people here are dazed with fear. They are simple, ignorant people—they've all gone crazy; you will lose heart altogether if you stay with them. There was a rumour to-day that the Tsar was dead and the army had surrendered—as though God would allow such a thing!"

She knelt down—she found it more comfortable so—and put her anxious face close to his.

"I beg you, sir, do as I tell you—go away! What I say is quite right."

Koshelev was silent for a few moments. Then he touched her arm:

"You are right, Parasha."

He suddenly pressed her hand with both his:

"You are right, you wise, good girl—I did believe

that rumour. But of course it can't be true! How could I have believed it!"

"Let go my hand, you are hurting me. . . ."

Koshelev blushed with shame and happiness, and let her cool hand go, but, touching it once more, he raised it to his lips.

"Forgive me, I beg you."

The girl drew her hand away.

The candles in front of the dark ikon had gone out, and dew had settled on the glass of the frame. The air was growing lighter.

"And what is his name, Pyotr Grigoryevitch?"

"Whose name?"

"Your young brother's."

"Pavel."

"I will ask for prayers to be said for the servant of God, young Pavel."

Koshelev recalled his last meeting with his brother on the road to Smolensk, his grey, velvety eyes. As though talking to himself, he began telling the nun about his brother, his adopted father, the gloomy Moscow house, the dancing master, the grenadier regiment, the battle of Borodino. And all that he told her seemed to him distant and unreal as a cool, pleasant dream.

The girl's pale face floated before him in the mist; her velvet cap was wet with dew; her slender shoulders were trembling.

"You are shivering, Paraskeva Savvishna, I'll give you my sheepskin."

"No, I am not cold, no . . . "

The coachmaker was snoring mightily. The huge man lay stretched out full length, his arms crossed on his chest, and he was blowing into his beard as though on purpose. The young people looked at each other and laughed softly—at Yevstigney blowing into his beard, or at something else. Dark groups of sleepers by the convent wall could be distinguished now.

The brass jug rattled. The girl jumped up.

"I must go. . . . It's quite light."

Both were shivering with cold and smiling. There was still something else they had to tell each other.

"Yevstigney has promised to take me out of Moscow to-night; shall I see you before then?"

"Yes, I'll come and see you. . . . You go, and we'll stay on in Moscow. I shall be expecting you. . . . You know, I've been thinking about that girl; men and birds perish in the fire, but somehow I feel God has saved her. . . . And another thing I wanted to say . . . but no. . . . Oh, it's time I went, Pyotr Grigoryevitch."

In the whitish mist Koshelev watched the slender figure flit noiselessly down the convent yard. The brass jug clanked faintly. She did not look round.

XXVI

The morning was bright and cold. The ground sparkled with frost.

Koshelev went into the convent chapel to get warm. There was no one there. He sat down on a broad bench by the door. The tiny flame of a candle trembled before an ikon of Nicolas the Merciful, a gracious old man with white curls, dressed in a blue stole. Cold sunshine was reflected on the floor. A woman's voice was reading clearly and deliberately behind a dark-red curtain near the altar.

"And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind . . . " The woman paused as though thinking it over, and then repeated—"a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks, before the Lord . . . "

Koshelev listened, turning to the altar his pale face with a newly grown beard.

"But the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake . . . "

"But what is it? Where does it come from?" Koshelev thought with emotion.

"And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire . . . "

"The fire—it's about the invasion, about the burn-

ing of Moscow," Koshelev thought, trying to keep up with the reader.

"And after the fire a still small voice."

"So that's what it is!" And he recalled the girl's face, lighted from below, and her mysterious shining eyes. The reader's voice stopped: the nun was probably praying.

Koshelev looked at Nicolas the Merciful, at the sun reflected on the oak bench, and a faint smile came into his thin face.

"A still small voice—and I didn't know. . . . So this is where Thou art, Lord, and I never knew. Lord forgive me, a sinner." And he knelt down, resting his head on the bench.

When he came out of the chapel his face was lit up by the same happy smile. He was not surprised when he saw Parasha by the side of the coachmaker. "This is as it should be," he thought, stretching out both hands to her.

"Good morning, Paraskeva Savvishna!"

She bowed and straightened her velvet cap. Behind her stood a little boy in a black jacket probably made out of a cassock, and black slippers of the same stuff tied with string.

"I've brought you your foundling," she said. "He is lonely by himself. . . . You might take him for a walk."

"Yes, certainly."

"If you only knew, Pyotr Grigoryevitch, how angry Mother Evgenia was with me for sitting with you last night. . . . But when I began telling her your story, she too couldn't help listening. . . . I'll come for the child in the evening."

"But we are going away in the evening."

"I'll be here before dark."

"A still small voice, a gentle breath," Koshelev whispered when the nun had walked away. She turned and smiled at him from a distance.

"What's your name?" Koshelev asked, squatting before the boy. "Petya, isn't it?"

"Petya," the child assented gloomily. He was fair and plump, but pale.

"You know, I can make mills and houses," Koshelev said. "Can you?"

"No"—and he looked as though he were going to cry.

Koshelev hastily gathered some sticks and began drawing on the ground.

"You see, here's a river, and here we'll make a mill . . . "

The coachmaker was sitting by the wall sewing a button on to his coat. He left off his work and listened to Koshelev with as much interest as the child.

Then the three of them went into the Devitchy Field. The child held tight to Koshelev's finger;

Koshelev took the whole of the warm little fist into his hand.

Suddenly the little fist began to turn. The child breathed heavily, trying to pull his hand away.

"What is it, dear?" Koshelev asked.

The child wrenched himself free and ran.

They were coming towards the torn blanket. The man in the red cap was hanging some napkins on the raised lid of the box. A man in a woman's dressing-gown was sitting with his back to them. These were Polyakov the violinist and Tatarinov the 'cellist.

The child ran up to the man in the dressing-gown and put his little fist on the man's knees:

"Daddy!"

The man in the red cap cried "Petya," and laughed, showing his yellowish teeth. The pale face of a woman in a bonnet peeped out from under the blanket, the post shook, and the blanket fell over her; many voices cried out, the man in the dressing-gown threw the child up in the air, caught him, and jumping over his 'cello case and the samovar, ran in circles over the Field, his dressing-gown flapping in the wind. The man in the red cap shook Koshelev by the hand.

"What splendid fellows! Real Russians! At a time like this to save somebody else's child and to take care of it. . . ."

Koshelev was particularly pleased because the man did not take him for a gentleman, but spoke to him as to a peasant.

Yevstigney's red beard was shaking with laughter.

"He's run away, he really has! Why, he's gone crazy with joy!"

XXVII

That morning Commissar Larka was ransacking the convent.

The commissars had orders to collect Russian prisoners. They took house-serfs in mistake for bearded Cossacks, and footmen whose liveries with many-tiered collars of blue and red cloth and stamped brass buttons they imagined to be the clumsy overcoats of Moscow Guards; occasionally they took tradespeople, too.

Behind the convent wall the tradespeople ransomed themselves from Larka with gold coin or turquoise rings and brooches they kept in linen rags or in the breast of their coats. Seven soldiers stood at some distance, waiting for the commissar. They were French infantrymen, small and swarthy, in blue overcoats, worn boots, and crumpled shakos with brass figures, "59"—seven Breton peasants, submissive and taciturn.

In the days of the Terror they had dutifully fol-

lowed the *chouans,* in the army they went obediently into every attack, and when grandiloquent bulletins were read to them about glory and their victories they blinked, probably not understanding what it was about, and thought their own thoughts.

Larka despised the seven Frenchmen who were under his orders. He learnt to raise his arm like their officers and say, "*Allez*," and, when necessary, to put his arm down and say, "*Arrètez*"; then the seven stopped at once, leaning their hands on the musket muzzles.

Larka understood that with the soldiers to back him up he could do what he liked, and he was thrilled; he was having a fine time. It was not so much the gold and the rings with which his pockets were stuffed that pleased him as the sense of power.

And yet Larka's movements as he approached the crowd, the peculiar way he had of snorting and of straightening the red band on his sleeve, betrayed fear. He was enjoying himself, and yet he was frightened. He was afraid that the seven soldiers might suddenly stick their bayonets into his back, or that the peasants and artisans might suddenly rush at him.

But the Frenchmen followed him obediently, and the people in the crowd took off their caps to him. Larka walked up to them swaggering, his hands behind his back. Many took him for a gentleman, but

at his first words they knew he was only a flunkey; and though they stood before him cap in hand, they looked at him with hostility and contempt.

Koshelev and Yevstigney returned from the Field to their usual place by the convent gate. Flakes of dry snow whirled in the wind. The commissar was passing through the gates followed by his seven soldiers.

"What are you after this time, you cur?" the coachmaker muttered, his teeth chattering with the cold.

Larka heard him and turned round:

"Who are you talking to?"

"No one," Yevstigney answered, getting up.

"Say who you meant." The commissar said to the soldiers, "*Arrètez.*" They stopped in the gateway, wrapped in the vapour of their breath.

"Who did you mean, you skunk?" Larka stepped up to the coachmaker. They were the same height and both of them big, heavy men, but the servant was fatter.

Men came up to them from the convent wall and out of the courtyard, surrounding them in silence. Artisans, doubled up with cold, buried their hands deep in their coat pockets, turning their shorn heads from the coachmaker to the commissar. The tradespeople also stood there, saying nothing.

"Speak!" Larka shouted.

The coachmaker looked at him calmly and fixedly, puckering his reddish eyebrows.

"You squeal like a pig. . . . Well, I meant you, if you want to know."

The crowd laughed.

Larka sharply turned round to Koshelev.

"Ah, your honour, you are here too!"

It was not the first time Larka had passed Koshelev, but he had pretended not to know him or to notice that he was there. This time he suddenly recognised him.

"So that's what you've come to—in a sheepskin and with a beard! I hardly knew you, my man. . . . Have you been hiding here long?"

"Yes," Koshelev said. "And you have no business to speak to me like that, you flunkey."

"Flunkey! Ah, your honour, sir—it never entered my head to fall at your feet! Graciously give me your hand to kiss; slap my face; have me whipped! No, my dear, your good time is over—never again!"

"Don't make so much noise, you dog. You aren't my serf, and even if you were, I wouldn't soil my hands against you."

Koshelev turned to the crowd. He was pale and his nostrils dilated.

"Brothers, I swear that man is a thief and a scoundrel. He has stolen my mother's turquoise

locket, which I wore round my neck. . . . Give me back my locket, you wretch!"

"Ah!" Larka took a deep breath, and suddenly struck Koshelev on the face with all his might. Koshelev staggered.

"Don't touch the gentleman, you cur!"

Yevstigney seized Larka by the collar, shook him, and threw him towards the soldiers. The crowd drew back, breathing heavily. Larka shouted, "*Allez.*"

The seven soldiers stepped forward, pushing everyone away with the butt-ends of their muskets. Larka and three of the soldiers chased the crowd into the convent yard, and the other four surrounded Yevstigney and Koshelev. The soldier nearest the gate said something in a guttural voice, and the four, shouldering their muskets, led the two men along a path by the wall where the frozen sand crunched underfoot.

The Field was white and hazy with snow. Koshelev walked along, spitting blood. A soldier pushed him in the back with his musket. "This is the end," Koshelev thought as he stopped.

The little soldier, shaking the snow off his battered shako, pointed with his bayonet to Koshelev's boots. Koshelev looked in perplexity at the man's rough, lined face.

The soldier muttered something anxiously.

"Your boots," the coachmaker said. "Give him your boots, sir."

"Oh, it's my boots he wants!" Koshelev sat down in the snow and began pulling off his stiff top-boots. The little soldier watched him patiently and sullenly.

The snow did not melt on Koshelev's feet, which were very white. He pulled off what remained of his socks too. The soldier gave him his clogs stuffed with straw. Koshelev put them on—they were still warm and slightly damp from the soldier's feet. He took out the straw, the clogs fitted him; Yevstigney helped him to tie the strings round the ankles.

A white mist of snow was whirling over the convent wall. Koshelev thought of Parasha—"the still small voice," he thought—and a gracious and poignant joy stirred within him.

He no longer cared what would become of him or where he was being taken.

Towards evening the wind howled in the Field, raising columns of snow.

A nun was running about the Field and the convent courts. Her kerchief had slipped off, her coat was unbuttoned. She was looking for the child and the tall gentleman. Near the convent wall some soldiers ran after her.

The wind was tearing at her black sarafan and blowing her hair about. A French officer met her at the convent gate. He spoke soothingly to her

while snow swept round his dark head. The soldiers overtook her, but the officer threatened them with his whip. He was St. Claire, captain of the Field fusiliers.

The front door of one of the cells flew open, letting in a drift of snow that blurred Mother Evgenia's glasses. With her coat undone and no kerchief on her head, Parasha fell sobbing at the old woman's feet:

"Mother . . . "

XXVIII

Napoleon was listening to a concert in the Kremlin.

The singer Tarquino and the musician Martini had been discovered among the foreigners in the Maroseika. Tarquino sang, rolling his eyes affectedly and showing his false teeth in a studied smile. Dressed in a blue coat patched at the elbows, Martini, with his forelock and sharp nose, always had a frightened air.

The Emperor sat under a jasper vase, leaning his bristly cheek on his fist. He was waiting with dull irritation for the fat Italian to finish an endless trill. Sometimes he lost himself in thought, and not hearing what was being sung or played, sat all through the concert under the jasper vase. But more often he got up, and then Martini stopped playing.

"Go on," the Emperor said gloomily.

He went to his bedroom and lay down with pleasure on the sofa, covering his legs with his grey cloak. The notes of the harp or the spinet, the trills of the Italian singer, the sounds of footsteps and applause mingled for him into one pleasant, drawn-out harmony. Smooth, shining snow was outside. The Kremlin Palace, Moscow, perhaps the whole world, was lit up with the brilliance of the early snow. Within him, too, all was light and still.

He was lying in an uncomfortable position, but he did not change it. He fumbled on the table behind him, picking up anything that he happened to touch. He took up the regulations of the Comédie Française, sent him by the last post from Paris. He noticed that in two places there were no dots over the i's; he read the word "*lampions*," and recalled Paris—the huge hall of a theatre, yellow monograms on the red boxes.

Absorbed in what he was reading, he began writing his comments in the margin, breathing heavily. The pencil broke and he threw both it and the booklet on one side.

In this way he wasted three evenings, reading and correcting the rules of the bakers' and the apothecaries' guilds. As he jotted down his remarks in the margin, it pleased him to think that people would marvel at his all-embracing genius.

He felt exhausted. He was kept waiting. He was waiting for an answer from Petersburg. It was his fate that he should wait. He always submitted to fate.

But in the emptiness of this waiting everything seemed to have stopped and grown silent around him. He was alone in a luminous empty space. The Empire, Europe, his army, other people, himself as he used to be—all had become a distant phantom, while a silent desert closed in upon him. He was waiting —and time and life had stopped. Such was his destiny.

He stood for many minutes at a time by the window, and his heavy, bristly face was reflected in the cool white glass.

He spent a great deal of time receiving reports, and took particular pleasure in riding, which helped to kill time before dinner. He rode in silence as though wishing to enjoy undisturbed the light freshness of Moscow. No neighing of horses, no footsteps were heard in the streets—it was a desert.

On September 29th, the Emperor was told that some of the artillery horses could not be re-shod and so could not draw the guns, and that it would be a good thing to spike all the useless siege artillery and leave it in Moscow. The Emperor said he would not leave a single gun in Moscow, spiked or not, for the Russians to boast of as a trophy.

On October 1st, there was a parade of the dismounted cavalry. Napoleon agreed to dismount several squadrons because the horses were dying for lack of fodder. The cavalrymen, in their grey cloaks and brass helmets with plumes and red facings, marched past him with a dull thud, thud, as though ashamed of being on foot. The parade lasted a long time, as did everything in which the Emperor took part on days when he was ill-tempered.

He dined by candle-light. The corners of the room were lost in darkness. The Emperor's face—a dim patch of yellow behind the candles—looked blind.

The dinners were extremely long and dismal. The servants were a long time changing plates, because the Emperor left his plate untouched. Dinner was to him a means of killing time, just like the concerts or riding. He was waiting in a desert.

Marshal Davout surprised him one day reading a book. With an uncertain and guilty movement, Napoleon covered it with a candlestick, but the Marshal recognised it by its grey cover for a new trashy novel from Paris.

The Emperor read once more Laplace's *Heavenly Mechanics* that had been sent to him while he was still at Vitebsk. Then he had been charmed by its perfect mathematical clarity. He too had the se-

cret of that clarity—to his all-seeing eye the world, with its mysteries, chaos, and darkness, was harmonious and bathed in sunlight.

Now the *Heavenly Mechanics* irritated him by its cold brilliance, its dry precision, as though a shining metal disk or ball were constantly revolving before him. And all that such a short time before had seemed bright and clear as the sun itself was merely the dull glitter of a lifeless ball.

The Kremlin halls were enormous; the candle placed on an arm-chair burned as at the bottom of a precipice. When he got up from the sofa and began pacing up and down the room, he felt like a mouse running to and fro under the cool vault of darkness.

The arm-chairs, the wall-hangings, the gilded doors reminded him of all the dreary bedrooms of kings—a gorgeous and dismal succession of rooms that had the shoddy magnificence of an hotel. He changed them without regret in his everlasting wanderings, his continual race over the earth, like that of the Wandering Jew.

The furniture was the same as everywhere else, the walls were built in the same way, and yet these Moscow walls seemed to have stood there for ever, and there was something mysterious about them.

He thought that although he was trying to make life clear and harmonious he was not clear to him-

self: he never knew what he really wanted, where he was going, and why he was leading others. He was blind. His eyes were open and clear and yet he could not see, and his power was the power of one born blind. The moving force of life, the last secret of it, remained for ever hidden from him. In his own soul all was mystery, chaos, and darkness.

In the night he came out of his bedroom in his slippers, with a grey cloak over his plump shoulders; he suffered from sleeplessness in the Kremlin. He talked to Count Daru, who was on duty in the Palace. The Emperor's nostrils dilated nervously as he sat on the Count's bed; the shadow cast by his coarse hair looked like the ruffled mane of a beast.

He spoke hurriedly and confusedly, as though talking to himself, and what he said were his own secret thoughts with which he had been struggling. He stared fixedly at the candle with his round grey eyes that were like the eyes of a sleep-walker.

"I'll go and smash Kutuzov," the Emperor said. "I'll either surround him and suddenly turn to Smolensk, or——"

Daru drew up his feet so that the Emperor could sit more comfortably.

"Or I'll stay in Moscow. . . ."

The Emperor's bristly eyebrows moved wearily:

"We'll bury ourselves in the snow, turn Moscow into a fortress, and in the spring and summer——

Summer . . . What will they say about us in France? We shall have been buried in the snow six months. They'll forget us in France. . . . What will they say in Europe?"

"No, Your Majesty, we cannot winter here," the count whispered. "We should melt away before the spring. . . . We have lost our strength, the army is disorganised. We cannot winter here, and we cannot take the offensive. The moment we leave Moscow and turn in the direction of France, the soldiers will run."

"Run . . . "

"They will run so that they can sell their Moscow loot as soon as possible. Victory is forgotten. . . . I hear the voice of fate."

The Emperor said nothing.

XXIX

Moscow had several days without snow—days of dry cold and piercing wind.

During those days the sappers took down the cross from Ivan Veliki, tying ropes round it. The cross broke as it fell. It was not gold, any more than the cross of the Annunciation Cathedral that a Russian workman had taken down; both crosses were covered with sheet copper tempered in the fire. But the Ivan Veliki cross was put in the depot as a trophy,

together with green Turkish banners and Prussian regimental standards found in the Kremlin.

The soldiers received their pay. In addition to paper money they were given Russian five-copeck pieces discovered in the cellars under the Mint. At the Nikolsky gate sacks of copper coins were sold for ten silver copecks per sack. Crowds thronged there from morning till night. The soldiers locked up the gate and cut a window in it like the slit in a cashier's desk. Sacks of copper were held up, jingling, over people's heads—ten copecks, fifty copecks, and at last a rouble per sack. At the Voskresensky gate the Guardsmen threw bags of copper into the crowd. The mob rushed at them and carried five-copeck pieces in their coats and shamelessly-turned-up skirts. "*Allez moossoo*—what will you give?—take a rouble—give it to me, *moossoo*," the crowd shouted all day long. The soldiers drove the people away with their swords.

Peasants from the village of Ostankino went to Moscow with cartloads of oats and flour from their master's barns, which they had broken into. The peasants heard that the French were paying for corn and fodder in silver, and they felt tempted to sell their master's property to the infidels.

Thirty cartloads were held up at the town gates by the Spanish guard. The sergeant took the tarpaulin off the first cart and began counting the bags,

but the soldiers threw the bags out on to the ground. The peasants, holding the reins and their caps in their hands, bowed down to the ground before the Spaniards. All they had brought was instantly snatched away.

The peasants protested noisily; one of them, a thin man in homespun trousers and worn bark shoes, jumped into his cart and struck his shaggy piebald mare with the reins. The others jumped into their carts, too, and standing upright, caps in hand, drove after him. The wind blew out their homespuns, and the peasants looked like some sinister old saints come down from the ikons of the Moscow Cathedrals.

In Moscow church bells were ringing discordantly: soldiers were amusing themselves in the belfries. In the Kuznetsky soldiers were driving up and down the streets in fine carriages with the women of the regiment, singing and yelling.

The thin peasant drove to Moscow to find someone in authority.

At the Voskresensky gate the Ostankino men mixed with the crowd, and soon, covered with dirt and mud, their coats torn, they fell upon the heaps of copper, fighting and throwing the jingling bags into their empty carts. In the evening the crowd had to be scattered by blank cartridge.

Loaded with coppers the Ostankino peasants drove

out of the town at a gallop, standing upright in their carts, bareheaded. At the town gates the Spanish sentry managed to hit the last man on the back with the butt-end of his musket. The peasant fell into his cart but got up immediately, shaking his fist. The others were shouting furiously.

The jingling carts galloped out of Moscow.

XXX

In the morning of October 5th, the Emperor held a parade of the Guards Battalions in the Kremlin Square.

That morning he did everything with a special thoroughness. He filled his tortoise-shell snuff-box with snuff, put some liquorice tablets into the flat golden box he carried in his waistcoat pocket, and carefully refolded his handkerchief.

He was very pale, and the bags under his eyes showed more than usual. At the Red Steps he slowly put his foot in the stirrup and sat in the saddle as though lost in thought.

At the parade men were as usual called up before the ranks to be decorated. The ceremony had been going on for over an hour. The soldiers began straightening their straps and surreptitiously turning back the stiff collars of their smart uniforms that pressed on the neck.

Suddenly there was a sound of gun-fire. The men turned their heads to the right, in the direction of the shooting. All listened for a moment, and the officer who was calling the men out turned to the Emperor in confusion.

The parade went on, but there was something sinister in the words of command, the clank of arms, and the very sound of the footsteps accompanied by the thunder of the cannonade that seemed to shake the empty sky.

Murat galloped up from the outposts with only a trumpeter and no aide-de-camp. The Marshal had lost his hat, the wind was blowing his crimson velvet cloak and long black hair; he was furiously urging on his horse with his spurred yellow boots.

"Mount!" the silver trumpet called loudly.

"The Russians have ended the truce," the aide-de-camp Béranger, his pale face and clothes splashed with mud, reported to the Emperor to the sound of cannon thunder. "A sudden attack . . . our flanks crushed . . . six lines broken . . . cut off . . . twelve guns . . . "

The Emperor's face was distorted with a hideous smile. He violently spurred his horse and galloped along the ranks. The parade was over. The Emperor shouted some orders, waving his three-cornered hat.

The eagles, bent forward, moved above the ranks,

and the soldiers, hardly able to keep in formation, hurriedly left the Square, cleverly shifting on to their bayonets the ammunition-boxes that weighed on their shoulders. The boom of the Russian guns and the rattle of drums had instantly roused the whole army. The Emperor had ordered retreat.

He had given marching orders, and at five o'clock in the afternoon the first regiments rapidly, and with light, eager footsteps, passed through the burnt-out streets to the sound of drums. They were Italians. Their eyes and their teeth were shining, and as they walked they straightened their musket-slings with quick, graceful movements.

By nightfall the whole army was in movement. Creaking carts, gun-carriages, regiments marching in formation or in no formation, streamed down the Yakimanka—some of them in church vestments, some in three-cornered hats, others with cashmere skirts wrapped round their throats.

Napoleon remained in the Kremlin. He spent the night burning papers in his bedroom. Two candles burned beside the mirror; twice he caught sight of his pale face reflected in the dim glass and turned away disgusted. What had he been doing, what had he been waiting for in Moscow during thirty days?

It was as though not he, but many thick-set little Napoleons, with cross, puffy faces, had spent those

days holding parades, listening to concerts, sitting at dinner, dozing over cheap novels—waiting for peace, and abandoning the army to fire, plunder, famine, and disorder. Like a hideous Saturn he had himself devoured his own victory. In Moscow he had lost himself—the single image of the conquering Cæsar had disintegrated in the flames of Moscow into dozens of little figures—tiny dolls of Napoleon.

And when he wanted to tear himself away from Moscow, his marshals had refused to follow him; they had left him alone as usual—and yet none of them had decided what to do, since he himself had made no decision.

At daybreak someone knocked at his door. It was the general of the engineers, a thin old man with a handsome head, grey hair, and sunken eyes.

Napoleon knew the general well: he remembered his ruby ring, his campaigns, the rewards he had received, and knew that he had an estate in Northern France, and a wife ill with dropsy.

But when the old man spread a big map of the Kremlin on the table, the Emperor forgot his name, and felt that he would never recall it.

The general spoke politely and monotonously, moving his finger along the map, and his ruby gleamed with a red fire. He was pointing out where it would be most convenient to lay the mines—

Napoleon had ordered that the Kremlin was to be blown up when the French had left it.

"Very good, very good," the Emperor said in surprise, uncomfortably glancing at the old man. "You will lay the mines. . . . Thank you. . . . It's destiny."

He said this about destiny in answer to his own thoughts.

At daybreak the army staffs, the Emperor, and his suite entered the rapid stream of retreat. In the cold twilight men were tying up baggage and nailing down boxes; all were busy and in a hurry, and no one recognised the Emperor.

The infantry carried him along the Yakimanka. The soldiers pushed against the sides of his horse so that his feet felt hot. He swayed rhythmically in his saddle, and it seemed to him that the army, life and death, time and victory, were all flowing back, past him, while he alone, the unrecognised wanderer, threaded his way forward into the darkness.

By two o'clock in the afternoon of October 7th, Moscow had been evacuated. Only a few groups of soldiers were still standing at the entrance to the Kremlin, which was barricaded with beams. The Emperor had left Marshal Mortier and the Young Guard in Moscow.

It was as though a fierce storm were driving out

of Moscow hosts of men and an endless succession of horses and loaded carts.

Fine rain had been coming down since morning. In the mist of drizzle, Moscow receded farther and farther away, sinking, as it were, into the ground.

Captain St. Claire of the fusiliers rode towards a hill and watched from the top of it the plain seething with carts, closed carriages, drozhkis, and chaises. The huge procession moved slowly in the mist, and St. Claire could not distinguish the regiments or divisions. The Grand Army had become one huge transport-column, and looked like some fantastic horde.

In the midst of the babel of tongues and the creaking confusion of carts and chaises, old and new, hopelessly crowded against one another, St. Claire saw a superb battalion marching with closed ranks. The brass glittered on their wet shakos; every man had a loaf of white bread at the top of his knapsack and a flask of wine hanging at his belt. St. Claire fancied that the closed columns were a Roman cohort making its way through a horde of savages.

It was as though time had gone back, and savage conquerors were once more abandoning the smouldering ruins of Troy or Carthage, taking with them booty and bearded slaves—the Russian serfs followed by their wives and daughters in tattered clothes—the living booty of the victors.

Carriages filled with bags of sugar and tea, books, candelabras, chaises with actresses and children, Russian serf-girls following their foreign masters, sick and wounded out of the Orphanage and the hospitals —it might be the hordes of Xerxes or Darius advancing through the mist and rain.

On the very last cart, loaded with green banners, the huge cross of Ivan Veliki, gleaming with red copper where it had been broken off at the base, swayed under the ropes that held it. Turkish banners and the cross ended the grand procession.

St. Claire tightened the chin-strap of his shako, buttoned up his collar, and spurred his horse.

XXXI

Marshal Davout's plan to advance through Kaluga and Tula towards the fertile south had evidently been accepted; Ney's Third Corps, Davout's First, and the King of Italy's Fourth, were marching in the fine drizzle along the new Kaluga road.

General Delzon's division was ordered hurriedly to leave Borovsk and by midnight to occupy Maloyaroslavets, the first town on the way to the south.

The general was delayed for about an hour and a half at Borovsk through having hot soup served in the battalions: the soldiers had to have something to warm them before setting out on the march.

At one in the morning General Delzon's first brigade—the small, quick Italians—hugging their muskets, slipped noiselessly into the ravine where there was a rickety bridge over the river Luzha, which was already beginning to freeze.

The Italian fusiliers ran quietly on to the bridge. There were no lights in Maloyaroslavets, the town seemed empty: the brigade would occupy it without a shot being fired.

And then, also noiselessly, the Russians slipped down to the bridge from the other side of the ravine.

The Italians saw the Russians driving their carts towards the bridge while their first column was being formed, a dense thick mass in the darkness.

Delzon's brigade was too late: the Russians were in Maloyaroslavets. The banks of the Luzha were turning blacker and blacker with the soldiers of the two armies.

A shell whistled over the heads of the Italians. There was the short thunder of an explosion.

The brigade came to grips with the Russians in silence, without the drums. There was a quick clash of arms. The bridge—a seething black mass —seemed to move away from the town—to creep toward it—then to creep away again.

Breaking the stillness of the night with its piercing whirr, the French artillery came into action. Shells

flew in shining arches over the dark belfries. A red glow trembled over the town. The Russian drums sounded and a scattered "Hurrah!" echoed here and there, interrupted by the thunder of the guns.

Lowering their gleaming bayonets, the Russian grenadiers in tall, red-topped shakos, with broad, white leather straps across their shoulders, advanced to the bridge, their cartridge-pouches rattling as they moved. The commander, Count Stroganov, was borne along on his heavy horse by the moving mass of the grenadiers. Pushed to the parapet, the officers cried in boyish voices, raising their swords: "Quick march!" The attack of the grenadiers smashed and swept everything before it like a heavy machine.

Then Pinaud's Italian division entered the battle with songs that sounded like the roar of a fierce wind. Swift Italians rushed forward, closing their eyes.

With a terrific boom a salvo of shells struck the Russian ammunition-boxes. The sky turned green for a moment and then trembled like a wall of fire, lighting up the road, the black trees on the bank, the smoking guns, and the French artillerymen beside them.

Instead of the deaf-and-dumb hand-to-hand struggle there was now the beating of drums, yells, shouts, explosions, and the dull roar of a night battle

growing more and more fierce. Delzon was killed in the attack.

Their leather straps torn, their shakos knocked off by bricks and falling beams, the Russian grenadiers, looking like convicts with their shaven heads, retreated slowly, pressed back by the Italians into the burning ruins. Standing shoulder to shoulder in the flickering light, they faced the Italians with their bayonets. Count Stroganov swayed on his heavy horse. Russian officers—mere boys—cried out in ringing voices: "Form square!" and the grenadiers immediately threw out their bayonets on all sides like a glittering stream. Rodion Koshevok's two friends, Corporals Akim Govoruhin and Mihailo Perekrestov, black and almost blinded with smoke and powder, were in the front rank.

Delzon had been too late. The French troops fought at Maloyaroslavets for a night and a day, now retreating to the ravine, now rushing into the town across the bridge with songs and drums, disappearing in the fire, running out in disordered crowds, and attacking again.

Towards eleven o'clock in the evening the Russian fire grew less fierce. The sound of drums died down. The battle was coming to an end. Slowly, as though delaying at every step, the Russians began leaving the town. The fusiliers were stationed in the Kaluga road just outside Maloyaroslavets. Oc-

casional musket-shots emphasised the weary stillness after the battle.

In the night Maloyaroslavets was occupied by the Italians. Low flames flickered here and there above the heaps of bricks and fallen beams.

Skeletons showed grey under the ashes. The Russian wounded, in charred and smoking overcoats, crept silently along the hot bricks. In the burning ruins the half-reclining dead bodies, black and mummified, looked like spectators in a theatre.

The sound of Russian musket-fire was heard at intervals.

The whole of the French army came up to Maloyaroslavets in the night. The Guard remained at Gorodnya, but the troops of Marshal Ney and Marshal Davout moved in long columns from Gorodnya to Maloyaroslavets.

The Emperor was with the Guard. He received reports in a peasant hut full of tobacco smoke and the vapour of breathing; the floor was covered with the muddy footprints of the marshals and generals. Napoleon sat on a bench in the corner under the ikons in his damp, three-cornered hat, one hand thrust into his waistcoat. There were lighted candles on the table, but his face could not be seen in the shadow cast by his hat. His grey overcoat was steaming with the damp.

The night was cold and foggy. No one went to

bed. Camp-fires were lit all over the field, and men warmed themselves in silence, wrapping their coats and cloaks round them.

At times the shooting grew loud and continuous, and then it subsided again and was only heard occasionally.

The Italians were singing. These small, swarthy men in singed rags stood to arms the whole night through, singing feverishly, with glistening eyes. One long, whistling sound came from the Italian camp-fires: the word "*Evviva. . . .*"

At daybreak, when the camp-fires in the field had grown dim, the Emperor mounted his horse and, holding his hat in his hand, slowly rode past the Fourth Corps, the Italian Guards, the Dalmatian regiments, and the divisions of Generals Ebron, Broussier, and Pinaud.

Seeing the Emperor, the Italians raised their shakos at the point of their bayonets, breathing out quickly and, as it were, shyly the same long, whistling word of their night song: "*Evviva . . .* "

Napoleon's broad forehead shone in the twilight. In a low, husky voice he repeated over and over again, also on a note as of shyness:

"Italians, the honour of this glorious day belongs to you—the honour of victory. . . ."

While the battalions remained behind in the mist, Napoleon spurred on his horse. Passing Colencour

and the Prince of Neuchatel he leaped across a ditch and came out on to the road.

Colencour's bay horse stuck in the ditch with its hind legs. Its tail and quarters were covered with shining mud but, quickly drying in the wind, became coated with a grey crust.

Colencour saw the Emperor's lustreless, blinking eyes. Dark figures of infantry soldiers came up from the road. A squadron of Grenadier Horse Guards moved along like a cloud. Some artillerymen were sitting by a gun in the middle of the road, facing one another; they looked as though they were examining something on the ground. They were asleep. One of them stood up and waved his shako.

"This is what comes of being an hour late," the Emperor said huskily.

Colencour bent his head. The fog made Napoleon cough.

"We were too late at Maloyaroslavets. The Russians have upset my calculations. I had thought of giving battle to Kutuzov on the Kaluga road, defeating him, returning to Moscow, and marching on Kaluga. The Russians have gone before me and cut off the road. This comes of one hour's delay."

And he suddenly smiled the guilty, crooked smile that always pierced Colencour's heart with pity and delight. "It's the end," he thought.

Napoleon was riding bareheaded. His sharp profile stood out clearly in the fog.

The Prince of Neuchatel overtook them. His horse was breathing loudly.

"Stop!" he cried. "There is cavalry in the wood on the right. . . ."

A blue line of men on horseback appeared in the floating mist. Colencour said:

"They are Cossacks, Your Majesty."

Napoleon laughed a gay, husky laugh as he wiped the dew and the mud from his face.

"Impossible. That's our own cavalry."

"They are Cossacks," Colencour repeated insistently.

A sound of howling and a piercing whistling came from the distance. The blue line scattered, drew together, then scattered again, and fell apart in what looked like small blue beads.

Colencour rushed forward and sharply turned Napoleon's horse by the bridle. The Emperor galloped back bare-headed, jumping high in the saddle. He was laughing hoarsely.

A squadron of French Grenadier Horse Guards, their cloaks thrown back, flew past them towards the blue figures, raising a whirl of wind and mud.

Soon the squadron galloped back. Many of the men were without their helmets and some had their heads wrapped up in their cloaks, through which

blood was oozing. A few horses had no riders on, and were led by the bridle. The Grenadier Horse Guards had driven the Cossacks away.

The sickly warmth of a peasant hut and the stench of tobacco made the Emperor dizzy. He sank heavily on to the bench under the ikons and leaned his head on his hands. A council of war was being held. He did not hear what the marshals were saying, their voices were like the heavy rumble of water. Towards evening a hardly perceptible glow of sunset appeared in the steaming window.

The day was ending; thousands of men were waiting for the signal on the battlefield, their stern faces turned towards the evening glow.

The Emperor uncovered his face and slowly put down his hands—and the moment when his swarthy hands were stiffly descending on the table, and the marshals looked at the hardly perceptible movement of his sleeve, might have been an eternity.

The glow went out of the sky behind the Emperor's head and the window turned dark. His hands came down on the table. His decision was to retreat, burning everything on the way.

After sunset, thousands of men in the dark field heard that the order had been given for retreat. They kept asking: "Retreat? Why retreat?" Scarcely believing their orders, the artillerymen began hooking in the guns and extinguishing the fuses;

the infantrymen, glancing incredulously at the officers, tightened their shakos. The artillery set off in front of the infantry, the cavalry moved off also. The soldiers stamped about in the mud, getting the ranks even, and the march began.

Musket-shots rang out on the right; someone shouted, "Cossacks!" and the men hurried on, one rank pushing against the other. The shots ceased. The Uhlans galloped up from Maloyaroslavets, bending low over their saddles.

An ammunition-waggon blew up, and the thunder of the explosion made the men push and hurry. Abandoned carriages, broken munition-boxes, and field barns were set on fire. A line of flames marked the army's route. As they retreated they burned everything on the way.

The Emperor was riding among the downcast soldiers. His way was lighted by torches. Wherever the vague rumble of retreat reached the soldiers' ears they hastily joined the columns in the dark, ran to catch up to their battalions, and, falling into step, merged with the huge moving stream that grew more and more rapid.

On the way the Emperor was told that the Kremlin had been blown up and that Marshal Mortier had left Moscow with the last of the French troops.

He nodded emphatically, as though in approval.

Blowing up the Kremlin was a mean, petty ven-

geance for his unrealised revolution, for the fire which he had not succeeded in spreading through Russia. The wheel of conquest and victory had turned—he had been repulsed, he was retreating, and everything now was reversed and going against him; the order and harmony he was to have established had crumbled away, and he was now engulfed by disorder, chaos, and the burning wastes of Russia.

The Grand Army marched slowly from Maloyaroslavets towards the great Smolensk road. The Old Guard headed the procession, followed by Marshal Ney's and the Viceroy's Corps. Marshal Davout's Corps brought up the rear.

While the French went north of Maloyaroslavets, the Russians hastily retreated to the south, away from Kaluga.

The two armies were running away from each other, each expecting to be pursued, attacked, and destroyed.

XXXII

The Emperor Alexander was working by candlelight in his bedroom in the Kamennoy-Ostrovsky Palace.

With pillows behind his back, he half reclined on a tall bed with a green satin quilt that covered him up to his chest. A morocco leather case with papers

was resting against his bent knee. The collar of his cream-coloured silk shirt was unbuttoned and the sleeves turned back to the elbow—it was more comfortable for writing. Sometimes he bit his pencil, thinking deeply.

Light was falling on his large, well-shaped hands and soft white neck. There seemed to be a halo round his head, which was slightly bald on the top, and the fair hair on the temples had a golden sheen on it. A three-branched candelabra was burning close to the bed.

The Tsar had already finished a letter to Rastopchin, and put it on the arm-chair:

"I was fully satisfied with your actions in such difficult circumstances, excepting in the case of Vereshtchagin, or rather, the end of it. I am truthful and I do not wish to be insincere with you. The execution of Vereshtchagin was not necessary, and the way it was carried out was particularly unnecessary. . . ."

Alexander was disgusted with the affair of the consumptive young tradesman, Vereshtchagin, who had been hacked to death by Rastopchin's orderlies among the mob in the square. He thought with loathing of the low spectacle invented by Rastopchin on purpose to please the mob. It was this falsity, this posing on the part of Rastopchin that was so contemptible.

A cantankerous, ambitious, stupid man, imagining—as stupid people generally do—that he was more intelligent than everybody else, boasting of having saved Russia. But his burning of Moscow was as revolting as the Vereshtchagin affair, though its consequences were infinitely more serious. All Rastopchin's doings in Moscow, his chatter and fussing, his absurd idea of giving people arms from the arsenal, his vile placards against the French, his vulgar speeches and, finally, his destruction of Moscow, offended Alexander's taste. A fine sort of Empire it was that could be saved by convict incendiaries—and a fine sort of victory won by the grace of a Chief of Police who had the fire-engines removed from the city!

"The burning of Moscow and the consequent destruction of the food-supplies and of all hope of providing for the winter has made it impossible for the enemy to stay there. The sacrifice of Moscow will rid the world of the tyrant's power . . . "

Alexander recalled these words of Robert Wilson's letter, which he had often quoted with a pleased smile.

The English general, who had chosen to be his Virgil in this Inferno, had written thus several days after the fire. The keen-eyed Englishman, his red-coated mentor, was right: Napoleon was in disorderly retreat. Rastopchin with his fire had had a

hand in it, and might any day be proclaimed the world's saviour!

Robert Wilson was right, but this did not make the salvation of Russia by fire any less sinister and dangerous. It was a sign of the Empire's weakness and not of its strength.

The self-confident English general irritated the Tsar. He sometimes felt as though he and Napoleon were mere puppets, and that London was running the show.

Alexander picked up from the arm-chair Wilson's letter, dated October 13th, written after the Maloyaroslavets victory. Wilson's polite and complacent contempt had secretly made the Tsar angry all that day, but as though enjoying the English general's insulting condescension, he read the letter once more:

"The Commander-in-Chief's inaction after his victory over Murat, when he ought to have moved his whole army to the left, his delay in sending help to General Dohturov, his not arriving on the battlefield till five o'clock in the afternoon although he had spent the day within three miles of the place, his extreme caution and indecision in councils, the way he creates dangerous disorder among Your Majesty's troops through failure to give the necessary directions, or hurrying without reason, are such serious faults that I feel bound to speak of them.

"The Commander-in-Chief's age and decrepitude excuse him to a certain degree, and one can but pity the

weakness which makes him say that 'his only wish is to drive the enemy out of Russia,' when the liberation of the whole world depends upon him. Such moral and physical weakness renders him incapable of occupying his post, destroys the respect due to those in authority—and promises disaster . . . "

"One might think Wilson was directing the campaign, with Rastopchin to help him," Alexander muttered, folding the letter; and a sarcastic smile flitted over his face.

"Saviour of the Empire, liberators of the world . . . "

He knew the Commander-in-Chief's real worth. No doubt Wilson described exactly what had happened, but his lynx eyes never saw beneath the surface. Kutuzov might be old and short of breath, and drop asleep at councils of war, and be the Russian Fabius Cunctator—yet if he had not stopped Napoleon at Borodino and defeated him at Maloyaroslavets, but had instead been defeated by the French, what would the fire of Moscow have availed Wilson, and where would be their talk of freeing the world from the tyrant?

Alexander sank into thought, and once more, as on many other nights, Russia appeared to him as a huge dark expanse lit up by the glow of the Moscow fire —a strange country of contrasts, with barefooted serf-girls walking on the mosaic floors of noblemen's

houses that resembled Greek temples, with beautiful arm-chairs in the salons and foul smells from the privies, with Academies of Arts and Sciences and crowds of stinking half-wits on the steps of ancient churches, with dumb millions of ragged slaves and a small class of elegant gentry—a dark ocean of fields and thatched roofs with Doric and Corinthian colonnades rising beyond them in the vague distance—a vast, smoking wilderness.

Who cared for Greek temples and colonnades in the dark land of serfdom? Its fog was in the peasants' blank eyes and in the blasé eyes of their masters, it was in their souls, in the air. An Empire could not rest upon serfdom—such an Empire was a sham; but he longed for truth and righteousness. It was for the sake of establishing justice and for the glory of God that he had accepted the crown of Russia. He would set his country free and bring every one of its citizens into the bright portals of the Empire, the home of freedom and enlightenment.

With poignant pity he recalled the Guards going to the front, the bright-eyed young soldiers in white trousers and tall shakos with glistening brass eagles, facing round to look at the Palace balcony at Tsarskoe Selo, shouting gaily.

With poignant pity he remembered the peasant conscripts digging trenches, their wet shirts clinging to their bony backs, their wet hair tied with a

strap. They ran after his carriage with a joyous roar and their eyes were shining.

He recalled Russia at war—her roads, her regiments, transports, hospitals, blood-stained stretchers, the wounded men in the carts, the sailors in hempen coats fixing a beam, the Old Believers' women in pointed caps who had met him somewhere on their knees, a gang of chained shaven convicts he had seen once, and that young officer near Friedland who had his leg wrapped up in tarpaulin sticky with blood, but was laughing as he dealt out cards to a partner with a bandaged head. Those millions of bright, shining eyes were like waves of light. Russia was waiting for a sign from him, and he would give that sign. God was with him; Napoleon was in retreat. The conqueror would fall, and then he would do all that needed doing in Russia. There was so much there that was still in darkness, still weighed down by the deadening yoke of serfdom. . . .

He would breathe a living light into millions of Russian souls, and Russia would become the house of the Lord, the embodiment of truth and justice. Was it not said that where the spirit of God is, there is freedom? The prayer of millions of men—the free breath of Russia—was his only justification.

He and Napoleon were mortal enemies, and one of them would be defeated. One of them was defeated already, but their destinies were similar; the

wild storm of the Revolution had given birth to Napoleon, and had taught Alexander and Paul.

In the first years of his reign he had been afraid to touch his father's papers, but not very long ago he had opened them. He could hardly decipher his father's careless handwriting, but in those enigmatic remarks jotted down on yellowish paper he recognised with grievous surprise a dim reflection of his own thoughts. His father, too, had dreamed of peace between the North and the South. An alliance between Paul, the ruler of the North, and the Jacobin Bonaparte, a campaign against India with the French, a league of all the continental powers against England—such were his father's great plans, traces of which he found in the unfinished notes. . . .

Alexander laid his hot cheek on the pillow and whispered his secret to the night:

"Father!"

All his reflections and thoughts about the war, about Russia, mankind, and God, always came up suddenly and imperceptibly against this one secret word.

Pressing his cheek to the pillow with a child-like movement, he looked uncertainly at the bedroom door, with a strange feeling that the door would open noiselessly and his father, Emperor Paul, would stand in the doorway in his riding-boots and black

three-cornered hat with a scintillating star on the lapel of his coat.

The night of the murder . . . He was guilty; he had known about the conspiracy, he had agreed that his father should be put away and locked in the fortress. Parricide. . . . No, he had not sought his death! He had understood nothing in his proud youth, spoiled as he had been by his grandmother. No, he was not guilty, he had never expected it. He was profoundly saddened, and there could be no relief for him.

An unbearable sense of misery and helplessness possessed him. Everything seemed to recede and fade—Russia, Napoleon, defeats, victories, grandeur, other men—life itself.

He lay alone in the empty bedroom. He lay in the vast empty darkness with open, unseeing eyes. His father would never come. Nothing would break the silence of death. No miracle would happen. He would never give that sign, never do anything. . . . He could not lift his hand, he had not the strength to move; he lay motionless in the empty space, and a deadly void, a silence of death, was in his own soul. Parricide. . . .

He would do nothing, but that which must be, would be. He would not interfere with anything. Not he, but the will of God was leading Russia.

He did not know whether God was leading Russia

through blood and splendour; she might be destined to save the world, to rise to greatness, or to perish —whatever it was, there was no changing her course.

The candles were nearly burnt out. In the morning he would sort out the packet of reports from the front and write to Kutuzov.

The letter to the Commander-in-Chief was dispatched in the morning. Expressing in it his displeasure, the Tsar repeated almost literally the English general's words.

XXXIII

The bare fields were one muddy plain trodden down by thousands of feet and hoofs. None could recognise the road by which they had come to Moscow.

Numbers of men were leaving the ranks and walking anyhow in crowds. Dismounted cavalrymen mingled with infantry soldiers of all regiments. The Poles and the Westphalians were generally the first to arrive in villages, and those who came after them hastened to pass the black heaps of ashes as fast as they could.

Three thousand Russian prisoners had been taken by the Grand Army in Moscow. There were tradespeople, servants, and peasants among them. They were in charge of the Portuguese battalion.

By night these Russians were fenced in like cattle, and no fires were lit for them. They lay down in the snow and mud like a flock of sheep. The first day of the march, the commander of the Portuguese battalion gave them three colts—it was their first and last ration: there was no food for the prisoners. On the second day many of them pulled out ribs of dead horses on the way and ate pieces of raw horse-flesh blackened by time and frost. Many swallowed pieces of snow, taking handfuls of it from the road-side, others picked up frozen lumps of manure. Many did not eat anything at all and hurried on despondently, thrusting their hands into their coat sleeves. The dull quick thud of the prisoners' feet was like the noise of a gusty wind. They walked bending forward as though driven by a relentless storm.

When they stopped for the night they lay down in the frozen mud with a dull murmur, and not a voice was heard at daybreak when the guttural cries of their escort roused them in the cold mist. The Moscow recruits, mere boys, their bare feet blue with cold, shaking under their overcoats, formed up in column of fours, and their bare heads, coated with hoar-frost, looked as though they were in iron helmets.

The thin faces, the men's eyes, and the very rags they wore looked transparent and colourless. It

was as though a crowd of fair-haired nebulous phantoms were walking along—visions of an unsubstantial, shadowy Russia. . . .

The Portuguese might have treated them differently, they might have shared with them their rations of roasted horse-flesh and rotten rye, and let them warm themselves by the fires, had not the way before them looked more and more terrible with every step: down-trodden fields, skeletons of devastated forests, and the creeping fog of fires swallowing up the dark stream of transports, horses, guns, bayonets—a dim hell where everything was distorted and pitiless.

The Portuguese were afraid, and shouted, driving the silent crowd and, out of pitiless fear, shot those who lagged behind.

No one was now allowed to sit down during the march and rebandage his foot or to pick up a handful of snow. The escort rushed up to him with angry cries, and if the prisoner did not get up, but sat with parted lips, obediently turning his head and gazing with transparent eyes into the smoky field, one of the Portuguese pressed the muzzle of his musket to the back of his head. The report was short and muffled.

Showing their teeth in a grin—they still imagined it was laughter—the Portuguese called these shootings "midnight broth."

The Russians closed up to avoid treading on those who had been shot; the corpses looked like bundles of grey rags as they lay with their faces in the mud.

The infantry avoided them, too; the ranks divided of themselves, without waiting for words of command, and left a narrow passage round each corpse.

At one of the halts, Colencour, warming his hands by the fire, began talking of the inhuman cruelty towards the prisoners. "This is what our vaunted civilisation comes to!" he shouted into the cold darkness. "This is our holy revolution, fraternity, and freedom that we have brought to Russia—liberating millions of serfs!"

Shaking with cold, everyone looked at the duke askance in silence, while the Emperor turned away.

The cavalry too avoided the corpses, but the muddy road sucked them in of itself, and soon only their backs were visible; the wheels of gun-carriages pressed them farther into the ground, so that no trace was left of them.

During the first few days wet snow and rain fell, and then came frosts and piercing winds. Cruel, icy wind tore at the men's frozen cloaks and stung their faces. Men and horses moaned with the pain.

Near Mozhaysk the prisoners were driven into a marsh. Breaking the thin ice they stood ankle-deep in the cold water, their heads turned towards the

road, while the Horse Guards rode by in close column. Their manes ruffled by the wind, the horses took small steps in the snow, the riders bent forward, covering their faces with their cloaks—all but the eyes, that seemed to be begging for mercy. Streamers of hair over their brass helmets flapped in the wind. The cuirassiers pressed them to their faces. Often it was woman's hair—wives', sweethearts', sisters' tresses, cut before the campaign as a token of love and faith.

Those brown and black tresses had once flown through the air like the dazzling wings of the goddess of Victory; now they were crumpled with frost.

The cavalry disappeared in the fog, and the prisoners were led out on to the road. Koshelev was walking in front with Yevstigney on his left. The coachmaker's velveteen jacket was torn and his flesh showed grey through the gaps. Koshelev heard his laboured breathing. The man on his right was a big, broad-shouldered lad with straw-coloured hair, a trumpeter of dragoons. He wore blue riding-breeches that broadened out above his bare feet bandaged with tow, and his military coat was stuffed inside his breeches in front. One sleeve of it was torn and the yellow shoulder-strap flapped in the wind.

The trumpeter smiled—or so it seemed to Koshelev

—and wiping the snow off his face with the cuff of his sleeve said wonderingly and even cheerfully:

"A—ah, Holy Mother!"

Dry snow, swept by the wind off the ground, whirled in the air that seemed filled with white smoke. The column of prisoners was going past Mozhaysk.

There was a fire there. Beyond the creeping black smoke the Mozhaysk belfry, with a round clock upon it, showed white in the distance. Its chimes rang out amidst the gusts of wind and the stamping of feet, and Koshelev suddenly recognised the place. That field with patches of hoar-frost, that dismal waste of rough clay swept by the drifts of snow, was the field of Borodino.

Soon he and the other men began to stumble against skeletons of horses and human arms sticking out of the frozen clay. Sometimes brass buttons, or a red cuff, or a head that had been gnawed by dogs, could be seen on the ground.

Singed rags and bits of uniforms hung like flags on the prickly bushes. A broken drum filled with earth showed yellow among the greyish grass. Muskets stuck into the ground looked like a fence—there must have been an infantry attack there, or some battalion had surrendered. The butt-ends swayed in the wind, and the iron on them was already rusty. Leather shakos crunched and broke when trodden

on, and soldiers' rags turned out of knapsacks squelched under foot. Corpses of tall men lay in rows, as though sorted out by somebody, near the green carts and the Russian gun-carriages; their faces were white, and their eyes had gone.

On the field of Borodino, abandoned by the living, the miracle of death—the sacrament of communion with a new life—had been silently taking place. For over a month heaps of corpses had been dissolving and melting together under the rain, and the autumn grass had begun to grow between the bones. But the frost had stopped this slow, unremitting work of the earth which was eating away the dead men's eyes, making their hair come off, filling their open mouths, marking with stars of rust the French cuirassiers' helmets, and stuffing the drums. The insidious work of absorbing the dead into the ever-living earth had stopped for a time: the battle-field was frozen.

Koshelev saw before him in the distance a solitary bastion shaped like a pyramid with the top cut off; at the very top of it there was a corpse that stood like a sentry watching this riot of death.

A redoubt had been there, but Koshelev could not remember the name of it; his thoughts were confused, and a succession of wordless visions passed before his mind. They flashed like sheet lightning, and died down silently, leaving him unmoved.

He recalled Borodino as though it were a dream and had happened not to him but to somebody else, in some other age, perhaps thousands of years ago—Alexander, Russia, the Grenadier Battalion, Borodino.

He recalled a night in the village in that far-off age. His company was falling in in the street, and he stood by the hut window, gazing at the swarms of August stars. He was listening by the window to what young General Kutaisov was reading. He could see the General's face bent down over the candle, the black down over his rosy lips. The hut was full of officers, but they were all silent. The grenadiers were quietly falling in in the street. General Kutaisov was reading aloud by candlelight the poems of Ossian. All this had happened, but to a different Koshelev and in some other age.

At dawn the grenadiers had filed past the bluish ploughed hills beyond the village. It was called Gorki—he remembered now. The Commander-in-Chief overtook them on horseback, followed by his suite, as though going for an early morning ride. His white-haired head in a linen cap could be seen for some time in the distance. When he came to the hill, he dismounted. A vista of fields in the cool bluish mist, with a line of camp-fires going out, opened before him. He sat down on the slope, and his big shadow merged into that of the hill. The

regiment marched easy again. All this had been in some other age. . . .

He recalled how the grenadiers, lit up by flashes of gunfire, went along the copse, disappearing in the smoke, and how a grey horse galloped past them with a jingle of the empty stirrups. He had recognised the English saddle stained with blood: the horse they had brought at daybreak for the young Kutaisov had had such a saddle. The grenadiers had heard the command: "Halt! Halt!" but they still went on. A tall general was standing by an ammunition-box, smoke was all about him, but he was munching something and smiling under the French gunfire. Koshelev had recognised him: it was General Barclay de Tolly.

The grenadiers turned back, to the left. Huge horsemen in shining cuirasses galloped through the smoke: they were French cavalrymen who, in the heat of the attack, dashed about the field, charging down on batteries and the escorts of Russian generals. All this had happened in some other age and to a different Koshelev.

It had been a dark, damp night when the order for retreat was given, and the grenadiers filed past the birch copse on to the road blocked with carts, ammunition-boxes, and wounded.

It was all different now—the icy wind, the stinging snow, the empty waste, the frozen corpses.

Koshelev looked at the barefooted trumpeter, at the coachmaker's waxen face with wisps of red hair frozen to the cheeks; he looked at himself, at his feet wrapped up in black straw, at his sheepskin stiff with frost, and at the snow that no longer melted on his hands. And he fancied he heard the rattle of his own frozen bones.

And the only true, the only real thing was his walking on the frozen ground, gazing into the empty, snow-swept distance, and being led along with Yevstigney, the trumpeter, and all those whose pale faces flitted past him. This was the real Russia —Russia that was stronger than torments and death, Russia that triumphed over death. He shuddered with ecstasy. All that a different Koshelev had seen in some other age disappeared as though it had never been; it was all a false phantom in the presence of the truth that was revealed to him now, of the Russia whose fate he was sharing. And all his sufferings, the gnawing emptiness of hunger, his body stiff with cold, the tramping of feet on the frozen ground, and the shrieking wind—all was transfused with a sudden radiance.

Walking as though he were treading air, he muttered with shining eyes:

"God is with us, God is with us. . . . Understand, ye nations, and obey—God is with us. . . ."

The trumpeter turned round and shook his head,

agreeing and disagreeing with him, and, with a side-long glance, slowly sank down. He seemed to smile as he rested his hands on the ground, digging his fingers into the mud.

The prisoners stopped. Two black-haired soldiers pushed through the crowd. One of them tried to pull up the trumpeter by his coat-sleeve, but let it go and said something, wiping his fingers. The other moved his palm over the young man's hair as though stroking it; the trumpeter's head bent obediently forward. The Portuguese held it down.

A damp report rang out, and all set off once more, as though the shot compelled them to go on.

XXXIV

At dusk the prisoners were made to halt beside a burnt-down barn. They lay down in the snow with a melancholy murmur. The snow turned dark and began to melt under their bodies. The Portuguese lit a fire.

Koshelev put his head on the coachmaker's cold knees and a half-delirious drowsiness instantly took possession of him, though he was still conscious of his teeth chattering and of the pains in his joints. He saw the trumpeter of dragoons walking through the sky with a brass trumpet, and a small black nun in a velvet cap. He understood that Jesus and Our

Lady were coming for him, and without opening his eyes he began to tremble and moan.

The coachmaker pushed him. He opened his eyes instantly. They were sitting by the very wall of the barn, squeezed towards it by the others. Wet mud was oozing down the black beams, warmed by human breath.

"There's an opening here," Yevstigney said clearly, "a way out into the field. Try and find it."

An opening had been cut through the beams close to the ground. The coachmaker bent Koshelev's head down to it, and Koshelev saw a dim light and a dry branch swaying close to it.

"Climb through it, Pyotr—I'll follow you," the coachmaker said, pushing Koshelev in the back. Koshelev crawled through the opening on his stomach. He thought that on the other side of the wall, in the snowy field, Jesus and Our Lady, who had come to fetch them, were waiting for them.

Behind the barn there were some low bushes blown about by the wind. Koshelev knelt down. He understood that Jesus and Our Lady were not in the snowy field, that it was only a dream, and he closed his eyes.

"Crawl along, Pyotr," the coachmaker said, "to the left across the field."

Koshelev crawled, and when the snow tickled his

chest he felt something tighten and strain inside him, and warm perspiration came out on his back. He came to himself, and grasped that this was no dream or vision, but that he was alive and crawling on the ground. He began to live once more.

The escort were huddled together by the dying fire. Their cloaks and the tops of their shakos were white, and black bayonets stuck out between them. The Portuguese were asleep.

"Come on." Koshelev drew a deep breath. "We'll get through. . . . God is with us."

They crept out of the ravine. The bushes creaked in the wind. Snow was blowing about the field. They held hands and walked towards the whitish streak of dawn in the dark sky.

The road was higher up, on the brow of the hill, and they could see a mile-post a long way off. They did not recognise the place where they had walked the day before.

On the slope of the hill men's arms, and, a little farther on, feet in torn boots, stuck out of the snow. There was a cart with its shafts buried in a drift of snow. Someone was inside the cart.

"A Frenchman," Koshelev whispered.

They both lay down on the ground.

Captain St. Claire of the fusiliers sat huddled up in the cart. His left arm was bandaged and hung down helplessly. The loose ends of the bandage

flapped in the wind. The fingers of his right hand were still moving in the effort to touch the delicate gold locket that hung round his neck. He had been trying to do so ever since he was put in the cart after the battle of Maloyaroslavets, and this was his last movement.

"He is dying," Koshelev said quietly.

"Yes, he is. Come along, Pyotr Grigoryevitch."

They passed by noiselessly. Captain St. Claire's head was resting against his sharp knees. A fine layer of ice covered his lips. Snow was drifting into his half-opened palm.

They came on to the road. A crowd of French dismounted cavalry had just gone past. An officer in a green velvet fur coat and a fluffy cap walked in front, leaning on a cane, and the soldiers followed him, with their cloaks round their heads. There was a pitiful light in their eyes. A flock of crows flew above them, cawing loudly.

On the other side of the road there was a slope and a young pine wood. Yevstigney was walking in front. His hair was powdered with snow, his shirt was torn, and Koshelev could see his bony shoulders covered with scratches.

The snow on the pine saplings was fresh and fluffy. A forest lay beyond. The still, frosty air rang in the ears, and branches cracked underfoot. Suddenly the snow fell off the branches and a musket barrel

peeped out, moving its black hole to right and left as though it were living.

A shot rang out, Koshelev felt a rush of hot air on his temple, and the coachmaker, with a loud cry fell, with his head against Koshelev's feet. A cloud of smoke rose over the pines. Branches creaked. A peasant in a homemade felt hat parted the saplings with his hand, shaking the snow off his lashes and his grey beard. A man in an artilleryman's green jacket jumped out of the bushes, waving his pistol. A peasant lad in a soldier's cap tied with a black woolen rag also came out. There was a bluish frostbite on the lad's cheeks.

"We are Russians," Koshelev cried, sinking on his knees. "Who are you?"

A strong smell of vodka came from the man in the green jacket.

"Russians—Russians," Koshelev repeated, staggering.

Yevstigney tried to raise himself up, but his sinewy arms shook when he leaned on them, and he fell on his stomach, spitting blood, and making hoarse bubbling noises in his throat.

"We've shot our own men, I do believe," said the peasant in the felt hat, sticking his gloves into his belt.

"We are Russians. I am Koshelev. We were prisoners . . . "

"Kushelkov—what Kushelkov? I'll give it to you!" the man in the green jacket shouted incoherently. "Take this Kushelkov, boys," he said, turning to the wood.

Several more grey-bearded peasants came out, with axes in their belts. They surrounded the prisoners in silence, blinking with their frozen eyelashes.

Throwing up his hands, Koshelev said quietly, with a trembling smile:

"Brothers, we are your own people . . . "

The peasants crowded round the coachmaker; snow was crunching under their feet. They stood listening to the bubbling and hiccuping noises in his chest. The young man with the frostbitten cheek said, blowing his nose:

"The master told us to bring them along. Let's lift him." He began raking out the snow from under Yevstigney's feet. At first they dragged him by his feet, then lifted him on their shoulders.

"He's a heavy one," one of the peasants muttered, straining under the weight. The coachmaker's body swayed above the men's heads as they plodded along, packed closely together. Clots of black blood fell on to their backs. There was a darkness before Koshelev's eyes.

XXXV

When he came to his senses he was lying in a cart under a sheepskin. The wheels creaked on the frozen ground or splashed through pools. The sheepskin that covered him was wet, and sour-smelling steam rose from it. It was raining wet snow.

He saw the driver's back and his rough, lined neck. The coachmaker, also covered with a sheepskin, lay in the cart beside him. His sunken cheeks were wet with the rain, and his eyelids tightly closed as though he were asleep.

"Where are you taking me?" Koshelev asked in a low voice, sitting up in the cart. He drew in through his nostrils the smell of the peasant, the horse's sweat, and the damp wind.

The driver turned to him his face with fair eyebrows and fair wisps of beard.

"Oh, you're sitting up. . . . You'd better lie down, sir; the road is very rough."

"Where are you taking me?" Koshelev repeated, and thought: " 'Russia. . . . I am dreaming. . . . Russia.' "

"I am to take you to your regiment—to the army, I mean. Our master has had a look at you. He said he could see from your body you were a gentleman, and your shirt, though it's in rags, was fine

home-spun linen. And your comrade, whom we shot, has a cross round his neck. So you must be our own people. . . . I am taking you to the army. But you are sitting up, you'd better lie down. . . . So you have escaped from the infidels?"

"Yes, brother, yes."

"There's some kvass under the hay at your feet," the peasant said kindly. "I have tied the tub down so as not to spill the stuff. Have a drink if you feel like it."

He stopped the horse, and Koshelev untied the damp cloth from the tub. He drank, throwing back his head, and the peasant watched him attentively, moving his fair eyebrows. Koshelev's cheeks and eyelashes glistened with the kvass he had spilt. He looked at the peasant and smiled; the peasant smiled back at him. Koshelev lay down and covered himself with the sheepskin.

"Lord God, my Saviour," he whispered, closing his eyes. The peasant straightened his coat and struck the horse's wet neck with the whip.

The misty field was in a whirl of snow. Haystacks stretched along the road; their tops were covered with grey snow, and the long black blades that stuck out waved in the wind.

A dark cloud of steam appeared in front: it was a crowd of peasants leading some French prisoners. Men and women in wet bark shoes walked in the

puddles by the side of the road. Two of the peasants carried muskets on their shoulders. Koshelev's driver watched the procession. The prisoners were made to walk in single file; their arms were tied behind their backs with the same rope that stretched from one man to another. A short, gloomy peasant in a heavy cap held the end of the rope. He threw a quick, suspicious glance at the cart, and so did all the others.

The prisoners walked bending their heads, with their eyes on the ground. Dirty and dishevelled, some of them wore blue uniforms with yellow facings and crumpled shakos tied with tow; others were in tattered overcoats, torn red jackets, and no shakos, their hair bunched up at the back; many had no boots, and only an old blanket with a hole for the head by way of an overcoat. Their eyes were red with cold, and watered.

"Good morning, Uncle Foma," a tall young woman said to Foma, and walked across the puddles towards the cart, raising her skirt in front so high that one could see her white, dimpled knees above her grey leg-wrappings.

Foma jumped down from the cart.

"Good morning, Marfinka, my dear. . . . I didn't know you at first. I wondered where you all came from, but of course you are from Zavalishtche."

A pale, black-bearded peasant with a French musket on his shoulder also came up to the cart.

"Ah, there's Timoshka the Invalid! Good morning!"

Foma grinned.

Now all the peasants looked at him, smiling and without any misgivings.

"Where are you taking them?" Foma pulled out a tobacco pouch embroidered in red and blue from the breast of his coat.

Timoshka the Invalid took a pinch of snuff and looked at Foma with still more friendly eyes. The young woman took hold of the cart and said in a sing-song voice:

"They were in the master's threshing-yard. The Cossacks brought them and said, 'You take them if you like.' The Cossacks told us to take them, but we haven't time for them. We have killed a few, and these we have brought along."

"What's the good?"

The prisoners stood in single file without raising their heads. The wind was playing with the rags of their blue cloth trousers. With their hands behind their backs, and their heads bent down, they looked as though they were pondering deeply.

Koshelev heard the woman's voice and raised the sheepskin. The woman's smooth, handsome face bent over him.

"Oh, who have you got there, Uncle Foma? I believe it's an infidel."

"Not likely. . . . They are both our men. We shot at them."

Koshelev saw the prisoners too—not their faces, but the stained and torn sleeves of their uniforms with brass buttons on them, and the way one man's red, gold-laced jacket, unbuttoned on his bare chest, flapped in the wind. Foma took off his gloves and stroked his wet beard. The peasants said something in an undertone, looking at the prisoners. Koshelev did not hear what they said, but it must have been something indecent, because the plump young woman laughed shamefacedly and turned away.

Foma walked over to the prisoners and struck with his fist a thin Frenchman with a long moustache, dressed in a red jacket. The Frenchman had no trousers and his bluish, sinewy legs were trembling with cold. His head was swathed in bandages that had slipped down like a turban. It was on this turban that Foma hammered with his fist. Koshelev saw the Frenchman's bloodshot, protruding eye and the dark blood trickling down his moustache. The Frenchman swung forward and then back again and sank into the wet snow, pulling the rope. The other prisoners—there were about a dozen of them—moved towards him, and the one nearest stag-

gered and very nearly fell back. They stood looking down and did not turn their heads.

The Frenchman moaned incoherently:

"*Cher ami, cher ami . . .* "

The peasants drew nearer, and the gloomy leader in the tall cap muttered:

"So now you beg for mercy, you brute!"

Koshelev could not see the Frenchman for the peasants. He sat up in the cart and called anxiously:

"Let us go on, brother."

The peasants looked round at him. Foma jumped into the cart—his wisps of beard were shaking—and struck his mare with the reins. The cart started with a jolt, and Koshelev fell on his back.

Foma was shouting something angrily and whipping the horse. Suddenly he turned round. Disconnected words reached Koshelev through the rattle of wheels.

"The place stinks. . . . Crows won't pick the corpses. . . . The land. . . . This year the grass has been mown twice. . . . Holy Saviour . . . mercy . . . ploughing for the master . . . "

These incoherent words made Koshelev feel strangely afraid. Pulling at the reins, Foma spoke no longer to Koshelev but to himself, or to someone flying in the mist behind the cart!

"Fancy dragging those starving wretches

along. . . . In our parts you won't find them doing it. . . . Women buy prisoners for five copecks apiece; they like to kill them themselves. One will cut a Frenchman with a scythe, another hit him with a flail or stick a spindle into his eye. . . . It's enough to make one sorry for the man. And if you come along and hit him on the head with an axe to end his misery, the women are angry—they want to do the infidel to death themselves. Heavens above us . . . they torture them."

Foma talked on, spitting occasionally, and shaking his head as though he were listening to someone in the mist and agreeing with him. The horse went at an even pace. Koshelev said nothing. Foma did not pull the reins any more, and was silent. Then he began to sing in a high-pitched little voice.

Koshelev listened to him, looking into the sky and watching the flight of the wet snow. The man's singing, the snow, the sound of the wheels, were all merged into one oppressive dream, unbearably dull and meaningless, and as senselessly monotonous as Foma's singing.

XXXVI

"Wo—o—o . . . " cried the driver. The cart stopped. Foma walked off somewhere, splashing

through the puddles. There was the soft rustle of the falling snow.

Many voices and footsteps were heard. Iron clanked against the wheel. Koshelev turned the sheepskin back, looked into the grey sky, and it seemed to him as though two heads from above were bending over him. Two young, grey-eyed soldiers in wet shakos with brass eagles and raindrops on their eyebrows were looking down at him. Koshelev sat up.

A white, blue, and red pennon tied to a thin post was flapping in the wet mist on the hillside, above the clay bank of the road. Two more soldiers in grey overcoats were coming down the hill. Balancing themselves on their muskets, they both jumped on to the road. Foma was standing bareheaded, his hempen trousers puffed out by the wind. Four brass eagles with sheafs of lightning in their claws bent over the cart.

"Brothers, brothers," Koshelev whispered, and suddenly cried in a strange, ringing voice: "My own!"

The four shakos jostled against one another. Foma, cap in hand, led his mare along the clay bank.

The wheels rattled across a wooden bridge, beyond which there was a big village.

Under the high post with the field Colours three drummers stood beating the tattoo. All three were

mere boys, in narrow little uniforms with yellow shoulder-straps. The brass drums jumped up and down; the boys were doing their job with zest, their heads bent to one side.

Koshelev buried his face in his hands.

Foma carefully led the horse by the bridle over the wet planks of the bridge. The sounds of the drums made it snort and move its ears in alarm. A long blue column of soldiers stood, hardly moving, in the square. The brass of their shakos, as they suddenly took them off, flashed like dim lightning, and the wind brought to Koshelev the muffled sound of the soldiers' husky voices singing the Lord's Prayer.

"Brothers, brothers," Koshelev whispered, gazing at the blue column. His dry eyes were shining.

In the evening the regimental barber brought to an empty hut a parcel from the Commander of the Grenadier Division, His Excellency Count Pavel Alexandrovitch Stroganov, to His Honour, Captain of the Guards, Pyotr Grigoryevitch Koshelev, a packet of fresh linen, a slightly crumpled grenadier uniform, a bottle of lavender water, towels, and a comb.

The barber, an old soldier with grey bristly whiskers, helped Koshelev to get into a big tub of steaming hot water. Koshelev was having his bath in an empty hut by candle-light.

"Ah, it's hot," he muttered delightedly, plunging into the water up to his neck. Tears ran down his

exhausted face. "Where is my Yevstigney?" he thought. "In the cart. . . . Why in the cart? He is wounded."

The old barber, taking off his coat and rolling up the sleeves of his red cotton shirt, began scrubbing Koshelev's back and head with nails hard as iron. From time to time he grumbled:

"You're lousy, your honour. . . . Hot water's the thing to destroy lice. . . . We'll steam the vermin out and shave you to get rid of it. . . . Turn your back now, your honour."

His head shorn and steaming, Koshelev sat on the bench swathed in towels, while the soldier held out before him the count's shirt of bluish silk, slightly smelling of mint; and suddenly the whole scene—the empty hut, the candle-light, the cut-glass bottle of lavender water—seemed strange to Koshelev. It was as though he had been asleep, dreaming a confused long dream of other times, other ages, of fire and snow—and now he was coming back to his own age, back to warmth and life and peace; but he was still unable to believe it, still afraid to believe that he was awake and alive, that he had returned.

The sense of not being really awake weighed upon him at the officers' mess in the village foreman's cottage to which the barber took him.

Many candles were burning there, and the tables were placed in an E-shape along the walls. With

joyful exclamations all the officers rose to greet him, moving the benches and raising their glasses to him.

He heard his name, "Pyotr Grigoryevitch! Ah, Captain Koshelev! Pyotr Grigoryevitch!" and stopped in the doorway in his borrowed, crumpled uniform, pale as death, with lustreless eyes and shaven head.

"How are you?" he answered quietly, feebly pressing people's hands and not recognising anyone.

It was strange and terrifying to see those heads, with hair smoothed down on the temples, the play of light and shadow on the faces, the thick side-whiskers, the shaking epaulettes, and the gold embroidery on the stiff collars, sparkling in the light of the wax candles.

He was returning to his own age from other times, and could not recognise the men with whom he had lived and the age in which he had been born. "How do you do? How do you do?" he whispered, and said nothing more, frightened and tired.

They made him sit down at the table under the candelabra. Dozens of eyes were looking at him across the transparent flicker of the flames. With his shaven head, thin face, and lustreless eyes, and his way of answering with a brief "Yes," or "No," he, too, seemed to everyone strange and alien—a dead man come to life, a visitor from another world. The conversation around him soon came to an end.

It was growing light when the barber helped him on with his overcoat and put his heavy shako straight for him: His Excellency Count Stroganov requested Captain Koshelev to call on him before morning prayers.

Koshelev followed the soldier alongside the dark cottages. Frozen earth crunched under foot.

"Wait a minute," Koshelev said distractedly. "What about my friend, the one who is wounded? Good God, where is he?"

"They put him into the hospital," the old man said indifferently.

"Hospital. . . . Where is it?"

Koshelev was almost running. His overcoat flapped against his legs. It was as though he were running from the waking life back to his dream of fire, of snow, of the prisoners' march, of the nun in the velvet cap, and the coachmaker who was like a tawny lion and an archangel—to all that had become his only true and real life.

"This way, your honour," the barber caught him up. "Where are you off to? It's here."

Hospital carts were standing by a cottage. A soldier in a leather apron took off his cap and clicked his heels.

"Listen, brother," Koshelev said anxiously. "They brought a man here with me yesterday—I have come to see him. Where shall I find him?"

"That red-haired fellow?" the soldier smiled, showing his white teeth, but immediately assumed a gloomy expression. "He died in the night. . . . There's no finding him now. They must have buried him."

The barber crossed himself. With an awkward movement Koshelev took off his shako and crossed himself too.

Count Pavel Alexandrovitch Stroganov, a tall, clean-shaven man, was writing something by candlelight. A sad, weary smile seemed to linger in the corners of his bloodless lips. His pale, longish face was lit up both by the glow of the candles and the grey light of the morning. The peasant hut seemed too small for so big a man.

When Koshelev came in, the count stuck his quill into the sand-box and rose from the table.

"How are you?" he said, stretching out both hands to Koshelev. "I am glad to see you. Sit down. . . ."

Holding Koshelev's hands in his cool, large palms, the count led him up to the table.

"I have heard of your Moscow trials, of your captivity, your sufferings, and your escape. . . . Sit down, my friend. . . . Why, it's light already."

Stroganov blew out the candles. The room looked blue in the morning twilight. The count was waiting for Koshelev to say something, but

Koshelev was silent. He stared at the count's dimly shining epaulettes, and had that same strange numb feeling of waking from a dream and returning to his own age. They were looking at each other across a wooden table where blown-out candles were smoking, and it was as though a gulf of centuries were between them.

"I should like to give you some good news," said Stroganov, after a pause. "Do you know that we have occupied Moscow?"

"Yes, so they told me to-day."

"Moscow is in our hands. Napoleon is in full retreat."

"Yes."

"Napoleon. . . . He might have done a great deal in Russia, but he goes away, having done nothing. We are starting out to-day, to follow at his heels and on his flanks. . . . But don't you think you ought to have a rest before the campaign?"

Suddenly recalling what had been his only true life in his long-drawn-out dream—Parasha and the convent—Koshelev said with trembling lips:

"Yes, please. . . . I beg you to give me leave to go to Moscow. I will soon catch up the regiment."

"Certainly, my friend. . . . I'll write out a pass for you at once."

XXXVII

The Russians entered Moscow in the early morning of October 12th, when the French divisions were still at Maloyaroslavets.

A cold rain had been falling in the night, but at daybreak it turned to snow. The blackened walls of the Kremlin and the wet streets, where smoke still lingered in places, were covered with fluffy snow that made Moscow look lighter.

In the morning, Prince Shahovskoy with the Fifth Cossack Regiment occupied the Kremlin. A mounted guard of Cossacks was placed at the Kremlin gates, which were barricaded with bricks and beams. The bearded horsemen in red coats and tall red-topped caps, towering on their bay horses by the Kremlin wall, might have come from another world —so incredible was this return to the forgotten past. Snow was fluttering in the slender forest of their red pikes.

Ever since daybreak the vanguard of Wincengerode's Corps, the cavalry of Ilovaisky, had been making their way through the suburbs under the gently falling snow.

All was white—riders, horses, the blackened houses with broken roofs and paneless windows, the churches without crosses on them, the peeled domes,

and the carcasses of horses in the streets. There was no thud of hoofs, no word of command. Only the horses snorted briskly with the morning freshness.

Moscow was a silent, snowy desert. The roof of Pozdnyakov's house, where the French theatre had been, had fallen in, and flakes of snow fluttered in the semidarkness of the hall. Carcasses of horses lay about among the stage pavilions, velvet rags, and cardboard helmets.

A confused murmur, a plaintive hum of voices came from the Orphanage and the Spassky barracks: Bonaparte had left the sick and wounded there. The smoky, stinking wards were seething with shadows of men; pitiful moaning was heard there, a monstrous babel of tongues.

A little old man in a brown swallow-tail coat met the Cossack officer in the hall. The old man's reddish hair was dishevelled and stained with blood, one glass of his spectacles was broken, and his neck was tied with a lady's bright-coloured shawl. An Order of Merit on a blue ribbon was pinned to the old man's soiled shirt front. He was the director of the Orphanage, a State Councillor, Ivan Akinfievitch Tutolmin.

He shifted a bundle of lint from one hand to the other, and held out his hand to the officer. The hand looked as though it had a red glove on. The officer

drew back and crossed himself as he looked at the little old man.

The movement of the cavalry stirred up the town. People came out in the streets, gazing at the riders in silence.

At the clayey bank of the river Moskwa a detachment of the Cossacks overtook a belated French transport-column. The Frenchmen did not run away or defend themselves, they merely tried to protect their heads and faces. Men and horses were instantly cut down, and the overturned waggons pierced with pikes.

Ragged, bony peasants and barefooted serfs had followed the Cossacks. A greedy roar was heard in the suburbs. They were kicking the dead bodies of the French as they dragged them along the ground. The peasants smashed their heads in with charred bricks.

In the Kuznetsky the mob threw out of the houses the French who had remained behind. Taking hold of their arms and legs they swung them in the air and dashed them against the walls, or rammed them into cesspools. The Cossacks had to disperse the mob with blank cartridge.

A file of soldiers, taking off their shakos and crossing themselves, stretched along the Kremlin.

The stone floor of the Archangel Cathedral was ankle-deep with sticky wine; on the night of the

retreat the French had broken wine barrels in the cathedral.

Figures of mediæval warriors out of the Oruzheyny Hall were scattered about the Kremlin Square. The iron of their coats of mail glistened dully in the snow.

The sarcophagus of Patriarch Hermogen in the Uspensky Cathedral had been hacked to pieces, and the wooden coffin, cracked across, stood upright in the dark tomb.

A brass finger of Catherine the Great's monument, melted in the fire, stuck out among the ruins of the Hall of Nobility, menacing or blessing someone.

Moscow was still. It was dumb with having seen so much destruction and defilement. Only from the Spassky barracks and the Orphanage came a vague hum of voices.

And then for the first time the sound of a church bell, rung slowly and solemnly in the wonted way, suddenly stirred the air. Moscow seemed to sway with the tremor of brass, sighing deeper and deeper.

In the Strastnoy Convent the old nuns sang the first thanksgiving service, and all who had survived the devastation—crowds of beggars with shining eyes—went down on their knees in the convent enclosure.

The Cossacks dismounted and, looking gloomily at the kneeling crowd, crossed themselves, holding their

snorting horses. The heavy strains of discordant singing rose in the air with the boom of the bells:

"King of heaven, Comforter, Spirit of Truth . . ."

XXXVIII

On a bright winter day early in November, Captain Koshelev reached Moscow.

The ruined city was now a busy high road: night and day troops, transport, and artillery columns went through it in a continuous stream.

Koshelev stood up in the sledge, holding on to the driver's shoulders. He could not recognise the city in which he had suffered the trials of fire and captivity. Breathing in the frosty air he muttered to himself:

"If she is not in the convent, how am I to find her?" In the Devitchy Field his sledge met an infantry regiment. The sun was reflected on their shakos and bayonets. The soldiers' faces seemed made of ruddy copper. There was a little heap of rosy snow on a young soldier's shako.

"Which regiment?" Koshelev called gaily.

But his sledge had already fled past the young soldier, and another one—a wrinkled man with a pipe in his mouth and also with a heap of snow on his shako—shouted: "Velikolutsky."

The regiment passed him, wreathed in the vapour

of the men's breath, rosy with the glow, and Koshelev saw before him a low plain and the convent wall in the distance. He told his driver to go slowly.

The Devitchy Field, where he had wandered so recently among shelters made of blankets, sheets, and tarpaulin, was empty now.

The sledge jolted on the uneven ground. The driver shouted "Hey, hey!" Koshelev was looking about him. He saw traces of human habitation in the snow and the frozen pools: a crumpled tin plate, a frozen heap of charred linen, a woollen sock with a torn heel, a worn baby's shoe stuck to the ice with its trimming of hare fur.

At the convent gate he jumped quickly out of the sledge and dismissed the driver.

The Mother-doorkeeper—a little old maid with a wisp of grey plait showing from under her black kerchief—told him, bowing down to her waist, that Mother Evgenia was in the convent, and, by the grace of God, was quite well.

"Splendid! Thank Heaven!" Koshelev thought.

The nun led him quickly through the convent courts and, wagging her grey plait, said something in her squeaky voice about destitution, hardships, and trials, but he did not listen to her.

In the entry to Mother Evgenia's cell the light from a round window close to the ceiling fell on a

brass samovar with steam rising from it. Koshelev fancied that the steam was dancing.

He took off his shako, placed it on his arm as at a parade, and straightened the skirts of his coat. His face looked severe and thoughtful.

The Mother-doorkeeper knocked at the door of the cell.

"Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

"Amen," answered a voice that seemed familiar to Koshelev.

"Go in, sir, and God bless you," the nun squeaked, opening the door for him.

He saw a pair of spectacles that glittered in the sunlight, a cage with a bird in it by the window, and a dark ikon in a wreath of dry flowers over a lectern covered with shabby velvet.

A fair-haired girl in a nun's dress hastily got up from the table.

"Oh dear, I have no kerchief on. Who is it?" Her black kerchief dropped from her hand.

"Pyotr Grigoryevitch—you?" she said, turning pale. She rushed to the hunchback nun, who was sitting in an arm-chair at the table:

"Mother . . . "

Koshelev gazed at Parasha, drinking in the light of her eyes. In her black dress she seemed to him a

slender Diana. He advanced a step towards her, pressing his shako to his breast.

"How do you do, Paraskeva Sergeyevna?"

"She is not Sergeyevna but Savvishna," the old nun in the glistening spectacles said sternly. "And you ought to greet your elders first. You are much too quick, my dear. Why, you haven't crossed yourself!"

Koshelev turned round sharply, as on a parade, towards the dark ikon, looked attentively at the fine lines of the Saviour's face, and crossed himself firmly. Then he bent down to the arm-chair, rattling his shako, and kissed the hunchback's thin hand. The flabby skin was cool and tender.

"How do you do, Mother Evgenia! Forgive me, for Heaven's sake."

"That's right. Well, sit down; we are pleased to see you. . . . So that's what you look like now . . ." and she moved towards him the velvet footstool from under her feet. Koshelev sat down obediently. He was uncomfortable on the footstool, and he did not know where to put his shako.

"Put your bucket under the table, sir. There's nowhere else. . . . Parasha dear, bring the cups for tea. The samovar hasn't been boiling for nothing! And see if there isn't any apple jam in the sideboard in the entry. We had Frenchmen here,

but I believe there is still some jam left. I like apple jam, sir. . . ."

Koshelev looked at Parasha in happy confusion. She seemed to him taller, more graceful, and more beautiful than in the time of the fire. She stood behind the nun's chair without raising her eyes, and her lashes trembled. Her girlish hand, the hand of a Diana, resting on the back of the arm-chair, seemed to Koshelev particularly beautiful.

She raised her eyes, and they both smiled and blushed. The girl hid her face in the hunchback's sharp shoulder.

"That will do," the nun said sternly. "See to the samovar, bring the cups and the spoons—be quick, my dear."

The girl walked past Koshelev.

"Paraskeva Sergey . . . Paraskeva Savvishna. . . ."

"There, sit down." The nun pulled Koshelev by the cuff of his coat. "Be quick, I tell you, Paraskeva—go."

When the felt-padded door had closed, Mother Evgenia took off her spectacles.

Without the spectacles her face was kind and gentle; her eyes were big and very tired, with bright tear-drops in them. She carefully wiped the wrinkles round her eyes, then put on her spectacles, and carefully hid under a grey lock of hair the string

that held them. Koshelev did not speak. The old woman's face again looked grave and forbidding.

"I will speak to you straight, Pyotr Grigoryevitch, sir," the nun began at last. "I don't know if there has been anything between you, but she has talked of no one but you all these days. And her tears were for you, too. . . . I'll tell you the truth: the girl has been pining for you, she has worn herself out, thinking of you. . . . I am old, but I can understand people's joys and sorrows. . . . Paraskeva loves you, I tell you, and she will be miserable if she remains in the convent. It will be like prison to her. How can I keep her here as a nun when she has given her soul to you, and is now your slave? And so, take her. . . . It is God's will. But if you have no honour and conscience, if you mock her love, if you wrong my poor orphan, I'll . . . "

Clutching like a bird at the arms of her chair, the hunchback stood up, shaking a menacing finger at him, and then began to cry, sobbing quietly. Her spectacles were dimmed and a bright tear ran down her wrinkled chin.

"If you wrong my orphan, I'll—I'll curse you." The greenfinch fidgeted in its cage, spilling some grain on the window-sill.

Without speaking, Koshelev buried his face in the old woman's lap.

"So that's it, is it? Ah, you bad one, bringing this trouble on my Parasha. . . ."

The little hands patted him on the back of his head and the embroidered collar of his coat. Koshelev's foot caught at his shako under the table, and it fell with a clatter. The greenfinch ruffled its feathers and jumped off its perch.

Mother Evgenia wiped the inside of her spectacles with her little finger.

"Your bucket has fallen," she said, smiling through her tears. "Why, the clatter frightened my greenfinch. . . . Get up, I hear your betrothed coming. Get up, sir. . . . Excuse my tears. She is in your hands now. . . . But I believe you are a good man."

When Parasha came in, Koshelev was sitting on the velvet footstool at the nun's feet. He did not look round, but hastily wiped his face with his handkerchief.

The nun waited for the girl to set the table, and then said gaily:

"There's a good girl, thank you; now we shall take tea with our dear guest. But you haven't greeted him, my pet! Go up to him and give him your hand—yes, do give it him, dear."

Koshelev stood up impulsively. The girl's eyes were like pools of light.

"How do you do, Pyotr Grigoryevitch?" Parasha said joyfully, giving him both her hands.

On that day they walked out of the convent together. Under the gate, where snow fluttered by the dark, glass-covered ikon, Koshelev took off his shako.

"Wait, Paraskeva Savvishna, I want to tell you something . . . " He felt a hot wave rising in his breast. He took Parasha's trembling hands.

"I remember I lay here under the ikon with Yevstigney. I remember it all, and I shall never forget it now. . . . It is as though I had seen another Russia—not our Russia but one that cannot and must not exist—a dreadful, incredible Russia. I lived in it and I can never forget it, and now I shall always be afraid of life. . . . I couldn't live if it weren't for you, Parasha, my joy. . . ."

He drew the girl towards him, kissed her tenderly on her clear open brow, and broke into short sobs, pressing his head to her velvet coat. She silently stroked his hair and his cheek. Her eyes were shining.

Both were smiling when they came out into the busy road, but their eyes were tear-stained. Peasants in sledges, Cossacks in tall caps on steaming, shaggy horses, and passers-by, looked in gay surprise at the pale officer in a shako with a rustling cockade and the convent girl in a black velvet fur coat. The of-

ficer and the girl walked hand in hand, not noticing anyone.

They were speaking of the dream from which they had both wakened, and of those who had remained in the dream for ever.

"And Yevstigney, the coachmaker?"

"He is dead. The peasants shot him by mistake. He was still alive when they brought us to my regiment. . . . I shall never forget my Yevstigney."

"God rest his soul! How he blew into his beard that night, poor darling. . . . There was a French officer here, a good man, he did no wrong to anybody. . . . When they were leaving he met me in the yard, bowed to me, and talked and talked—but of course I couldn't understand what he said. When you and dear Yevstigney were taken prisoners I ran to the Devitchy Field in search of you, and their soldiers chased me—and that officer drove them off with his whip."

"What was his name?"

"There's no making out their names. . . . And you know I met that child, your foundling, with his father in the Devitchy Field."

"Yes, yes . . . I remember that day. And that Larka, the servant who was a commissar?"

"I know. . . . He was shot. Seven soldiers used to go about with him, and when the French were about to leave, those seven shot him with their

muskets in the convent yard by the wall. They took off his boots and clothes. There was no one to take the corpse away, and it lay there for days, blue and terrible, under a piece of tarpaulin. When the Cossacks came they carried it away. Our nuns sang the burial service."

"Well, God be with him. . . . There's somebody else I wanted to ask about, but I can't think who it was."

"The grenadier with the white dog?"

"That's it!"

"Rodion Stepanitch, dear old man. . . . He made a good recovery, and came to me to say goodbye. He kept comforting me and saying you would return, Pyotr Grigoryevitch. When our men came, he left Moscow with his white dog. He went away the other day, but he did not tell me where. . . ."

"I must go too. I have to catch up my regiment."

"It's different now—now you will come back."

"I think I shall, Parasha, my joy . . . "

The wind rustled the officer's cockade, throwing snow into the girl's happy face.

XXXIX

On the day when Koshelev and Parasha walked down the Arbat, the frozen, wind-swept road to

Smolensk was a mass of whirling snow that blotted out the earth and the sky.

Hardly visible in the huge waves of the storm, the Grand Army was crawling along.

It seemed to have entered an icy desert of a world in which man is nothing, to have entered the sonorous void of eternity in order to disappear in it.

Covered with ice, dirt, and soot, the silent horde trailed through the snow. Droves of scraggy horses followed it, dragging guns. In the ringing stillness of the frost nothing was heard but the muffled cries of the drivers, the cracks of the whips, and the dull thud of the men's feet. The Conquering Horseman of the South was numb with cold. The spell of frost had fallen on the Empire, on the Revolution, on Europe—the whole world was bound with deadening fetters of ice.

Crowds of phantoms in ragged uniforms, wrapped in pieces of tarpaulin, women's coats, carpets, and tattered cloaks, walked through the icy desert, looking like hideous vampires with purplish-red faces, and dishevelled beards encrusted with icicles and frozen blood. Some were unarmed and did not keep to the ranks, others were armed and marched in military formation, but all hung their heads in silence.

They were prisoners of ice and frost, of death itself.

At first they carried the wounded and, admiring

their own humaneness, refrained from shooting the army horses.

Then they began to take the coats off those who lagged behind, to abandon the dying, and to cut pieces of flesh out of the horses without troubling to shoot them.

Men were marching in an empty void. They eagerly thronged round the fire, if there was any, and those who were stronger killed the weak to secure their share of the fire and warmth.

It was a desperate struggle for the tortured body that still held breath in it, for the living fire that still burned in men's eyes—a pitiless battle for life with pitiless death.

Then all grew still in the overwhelming silence of the snowy plain. There were no more fights and murders by the fires, no robbing of transports or plundering the dead; all was over. The men threw down their bags of looted platinum and lay down in the snow, longing for nothing but rest and oblivion. They surrendered to death. But others marched on, invincible shadows of the harmonious world from which they had come.

Wreathed in the vapour of their breath, the Old Guard marched in column of fours after their Emperor with a ponderous, measured tread—and it was as menacing as the movement of an enormous battleship in the smoke and thunder of battle. The wind

tore at the red cockades in their bearskins, blew out the skirts of their blue uniforms, rattled the frozen iron and brass.

Marshal Ney's column brought up the rear—firm and immovable, a pillar of the Empire amidst chaos.

At Viazma a leaden sun broke through the clouds, and the men caught a glimpse of the Emperor.

He had exchanged his black three-cornered hat for a Lithuanian cap of green velvet with flaps over the ears. He walked before the ranks, leaning on a cane, frowning slightly at every step. In his green cap and long fur coat he looked like a pilgrim with a staff. There was something monastic in his reserved and thoughtful movements, something pure and spiritual in his smile. His delicate face was again like the face of that slender, ascetic-looking Republican General who had once retreated from Acre into the scorching sands of Egypt.

A heavily-built general wrapped in furs and scarves galloped up toward him at full speed across the snowy field by the village of Mihalevka. The general brought the news of Malet's conspiracy in Paris.

The Emperor clasped his cane more tightly and walked on.

In Loison's Corps, the officers of the 113th Regiment of Tuscany said openly that the Emperor should be arrested and handed over to the Russians,

that they must lay down their arms and stop the deadly retreat.

The Emperor was walking in front of the Guard when they told him about the conspiracy in the Tuscany Regiment.

Old soldiers were behind him, their hands wrapped up in bits of cloth or fur—the iron of the muskets was too cold to touch. They blinked their white lashes, growling like a pack of wolves. The Emperor turned round with a bright smile. The grey light of his eyes seemed to shine in the eyes of all.

"Come, come, old men, that's enough grumbling. . . . Let us sing. Sing 'We're coming home . . . '"

And in answer to his look a glow came into the men's eyes, as though they had been grumbling on purpose for him to turn round and warm them.

The Emperor was fighting his way out of Russia, but Ney had remained in the snows.

One night the Emperor waited for Ney in a howling storm.

He gazed into the fire with a humble smile. Old men in bearskin helmets were lowering heavy banners into the flames, and the shabby silk rustled in the fire. The Emperor was burning his Colours. Ney had been left in the snow. The Horseman of the South had his feet cut off. He would have to crawl on his hands.

The Emperor walked away from the fire. Two kings, one prince, eight marshals, and the Old Guard had followed him across the fields. Ney was cut off. The Imperial eagles had become birds of death and despair—screeching birds with iron claws.

Occasional reinforcements that were still marching towards Moscow—Alsatian recruits or a squadron of Portuguese Light Cavalry—met them on the road like visions from a different, an incredible world.

Handsome, swarthy riders in brown uniforms were drawn up by the roadside. Before night the snowstorm would sweep them away, the frost would burn out their lungs; before night fresh corpses would be heaped up by the roadside in the snow.

The Prince of Hesse-Cassel's cavalry had halted in the field—a hundred and fifty dismounted dragoons, wrapped in white cloaks.

They stood in the field like huge white crusaders, shielding the young prince with their bodies. They would stand there all night, and by daybreak the storm would have levelled down their grave-mound of snow.

The Emperor walked on, leaning on his cane.

His yellowish hand was covered with snow. With a bright smile he examined the beautifully formed crystals—Laplace's universe on his hand. He reflected that the universe was meaningless, or that

perhaps, from the point of view of the universe, the earth and man were meaningless nonentities.

The Russians were at the heels of his army and on its flanks. The Cossacks crossed its path, destroying whole detachments and transport-columns, and withdrawing like phantoms into the drifting snow.

In the Russian ranks, too, soldiers were frozen on the march; there, too, the worn-out artillery horses gasped and snorted, rolling their eyes.

At Krasnoe, the day after the French had fought their way out, a thaw set in for a few hours.

The wet, thawing field detained the Russians; they tried to clear away the corpses, burning them in heaps that would not catch fire, and dragging them with hooks into pits, together with the living. The steaming ground was astir.

The vanguard of the Pavlograd Hussars had to dismount to clear the way: the horses would not advance over the dead bodies, and the hussars cleared them off the road with their lances.

In the regimental reports they boasted of trophies —guns and thousands of prisoners—but these trophies and the night battles with crowds of desperate, half-frozen men, made many feel sick with shame and disgust, while in others they roused the lust of cruelty.

They stripped the prisoners and drove them barefoot through the snow, prodding them from behind

with the blunt ends of their lances. The peasants bought them from the Cossacks at five copecks apiece, for the amusement of their women and children. After a time no more prisoners were taken, they were simply pushed off the road. A French grenadier wrapped up in a priest's torn vestment would be deliriously banging his fists on the ice, calling to his comrades to beat the Russians, while another would be muttering as a Cossack pushed him aside with his lance into a heap of frozen men:

"Good God—twenty wounds, fifteen campaigns, a soldier of the Guard—and a vile Cossack won't even trouble to make me a prisoner."

And when the Russians had followed the French into Smolensk, they saw that the whole space down to the Dnieper was one frozen graveyard.

The Russians began burning stacks of corpses on the fortress rampart, and, softened by the fire, the frozen legs began to move as though the dead soldiers of the Grand Army were on the march again.

Ammunition-boxes, hospital carriages, guns, pontoons, muskets, cuirasses, shakos, bearskins, trumpets, swords, drums—were scattered on the snow by the Smolensk wall, as though it were precisely on this spot that the Grand Army had thrown off its accoutrements before it vanished. A succession of empty carriages stretched along the embankment. Frozen horses were lying between the shafts.

Men had seen too much of death, they had grown used to it, and their feelings of pity and compassion were exhausted.

The Cossacks on their snorting horses were pillaging the overturned carriages of Marshal Ney's transport. One of them put on an embroidered marshal's coat over his torn tunic and stuck the marshal's hat on his greasy hair.

A terrible, bearded marshal, brandishing a red lance, dashed past the retreating column of the French, put out his tongue at them, and vanished.

The Russians seized Napoleon's carriages. Russian soldiers together with French stragglers rummaged in the archives and green portfolios, burst open boxes containing regimental money, cosmetics, bottles of scent, and dress uniforms. Imperial papers were sent flying in the wind. An orgy of looting went on in the dark.

A beardless Calmuck with high cheek-bones seized the Emperor's gilded sceptre and his green velvet robe.

He wrapped the robe round him, and resting the sceptre against his knee, galloped towards the French —he was the Emperor. With a piercing yell the Calmuck circled round Marshal Ney's column and was seen no more.

Marshal Ney was marching in the ranks with a soldier's musket. He had fought his way through

with the last remnants of his force: he brought out of the Russian desert a crowd of half-dead men with faces blackened by frost and gunpowder.

In the first glimmer of daylight he unbuttoned his cloak and with his rough hand wiped the hoar-frost off his cheeks. The harsh light of the dawn was reflected on the Marshal's stern face.

THE EPILOGUE

THE EPILOGUE

I

THE general march of the Russian army towards the Pantheon Gates was headed by the Preobrazhensky Regiment. Russians entered Paris to the music of the old French song: "Vive le roi Henry IV."

The Guards Battalion was preceded by a Cossack bodyguard riding in close order. Bearded men in tall red caps lightly and gracefully swayed in their saddles under a forest of red lances, the silver on their belts and cartridge pouches jingling at every movement.

The Emperor Alexander rode behind the Cossacks on a light grey horse. He flicked it on the neck with his white glove, coughing dryly with the dust, and, screwing up his short-sighted eyes, said something, with a smile, to the King of Prussia. The King politely leaned forward in his saddle. The white plumes of their three-cornered hats mingled together, rustling in the wind.

Dropping flecks of foam, the horses of their suites

and the escorts followed the King and the Emperor —the Austrian and Prussian horses white and chestnut, the heavy Russian horses grey dappled with black. The shining cuirasses of the Horse Guards reflected, like brass mirrors, walls, windows, bits of blue sky, horses' heads, white uniforms, and the glitter of silver.

Orlov, the Emperor's aide-de-camp, unfastened his shako and, placing it on his knee, wiped his moist whiskers with a handkerchief. Orlov was smiling. That morning when Barclay de Tolly's troops had advanced amidst the thunder of the guns to the heights of Belleville and Montmartre, a messenger from Marmont had galloped up with a flag of truce, and the Tsar with a wave of his glove ordered the troops to halt. Sending Orlov to negotiate with the French, he had said quickly, pursing up his thin lips that were so like his grandmother's:

"Whether we fight our way in or march in, we must sleep in Paris to-night, among the ruins or under gilded roofs, whether they want us or not."

Tsarevitch Constantine in a dark uniform with a crumpled red collar, and a whip twisted round his cuff, galloped past the Grenadier Battalion on his light bay horse. Raising his bristly reddish eyebrows he shouted gaily:

"Ha, Russian eagles—see where you've flown!"

The Tsarevitch had noticed the grenadiers as he

looked down from the heights of Montmartre, while the broad, bluish towers of Notre Dame still floated in the morning mist above the mass of roofs.

The grenadiers, dusty and sunburnt, in white, baggy trousers, and with red cockades on their shakos, tramped along heavily, staring in front of them but seeing and hearing nothing. The officer at their head took off his hat, brushing his face with its feathers, and unsheathing his sword shouted out hoarse words of command. The grenadiers instantly turned their heads with unseeing eyes, and from thousands of parched throats burst a deafening roar that shook the red cockades.

The Russian infantry, in shakos with brass figures on them, impatiently marked time waiting for the command: "Quick march!"

In the Champs Elysées the windows, the crowds, the striped blinds, the troops, the regimental colours —all the scene was wrapped in a sunlit mist. Paris floated out to meet them in a sea of reddish dust.

Paris was waiting, and Paris was tired of the blare of military bands, the glitter of trumpets, the green bows on the bayonets. Where was the fair-haired Emperor of the barbarians? Where was Alexander? There he was. Long live Alexander! Paris was tired.

There were people at the windows, on the fences, on the roofs, on the trees, on lantern posts, on tops

of carriages. All the shops and restaurants were open. Paris was thirsty.

A swarthy Cossack in red Turkish trousers, looking at the crowd out of the corner of his yellow eye, and spitting with the dust, was tying his horse to a chestnut-tree. A manifesto of 1814 had declared that the savage Cossack boiled babies for food; the crowd rushed away from the red barbarian, then came closer again.

In the evening bits of straw and hay flew about the Champs Elysées.

Stallions neighed and snorted under the bare trees, and stacks of red lances, like huge quivers, swayed over the bonfires.

In the evening a faint smell of burning pervaded Paris—a smoky smell as of villages and open fields; the bluish smoke of Russian camp-fires rose in light pillars towards the March sky.

A barefooted Cossack, his shirt showing white in the evening twilight, was taking a drove of horses down to the Seine.

The horses walked carefully down the clay bank, and wading ankle-deep into the water gently snorted with pleasure. Dilating their nostrils they drank, moving their soft lips.

The glow of the camp-fires danced on the walls of houses. Cossacks sat in silence round the black cauldrons. They had taken off their coats and were

scratching their swarthy chests and backs, yawning desperately. They were tired.

The bearded cooks, their hair held back by a greasy strap, squatting like Scythian priests, stirred the boiling food in the cauldrons.

A brass gun was trundling clumsily across a narrow street, as though unable to rest. Placing their shakos on the gun, the artillerymen, thickly covered with dust, shook out their green uniforms, undoing the tight hooks of their collars and taking off their sweaty cloth stocks.

This was the battery of the Household Artillery Brigade, which had that morning bombarded Paris with twenty guns from the Chaumont heights. When the French galloper dashed up with a flag of truce the Russian gunners, black with powder, had greeted him with laughter and a wild "Hurrah."

The infantry of the line were stationed along the bank of the Seine, the Guards by the Bois de Boulogne. Their muskets were stacked on the stands with rolled-up Colours at the top of them. Campfires were alight; there was the thud of many feet and shouts of "Hurrah."

The glow from the fires trembled in the dark water of the Seine. Moscow recruits sat on the bank, bathing their tired feet in the river. The heavy shakos had left red marks on their shaven heads. Merry laughter rang out in the evening twilight.

Horses were neighing, there was a hum of voices, men's singing, outbursts of "Hurrah"—the Scythians were encamped in Paris.

Calmuck cavalry and Bashkirs in red cloth coats and caps of fox fur, with quivers of arrows behind their backs, were still pouring into the city from the Faubourg St. Martin. Their legs were bent almost double, and their yellow faces seemed asleep. The broad-cheeked drummers were drowsily shaking the kettle-drums that looked like Indian brass pagodas.

On the green banks of the Seine the camp-fires of the infantry crackled in the rising mist. Sounds of dancing bare feet and a jaunty Moscow song came from there.

Conquered Paris was a blaze of light. There were crowds on the pavements, aides-de-camp dashed to and fro, fluttering their cockades of cocks' feathers. At Véry's and in the Palais-Royal all the tables were engaged; the rooms hummed with conversation, spurs jingled, uniforms glittered with gold. They were throwing coins out of windows to the crowd. Barbarians were in the capital of the world.

The theatre was stuffy and crowded. All were hot and talking loudly, so that the orchestra could scarcely be heard. Suddenly all grew still for a moment, then there was a gay stir, and everyone stood up with a deafening shout:

"Long live Alexander!"

The Emperor Alexander was in the middle box of the grand circle. He was wearing the white Horse Guards uniform and the diamond star of St. Andrew. He screwed up his eyes and bowed, constantly raising his golden lorgnette and lowering it again.

Lais, an old actor who had been a desperate Jacobin in the days of the Terror, was singing to the fair-haired Alexander that he was the King of Kings.

The Roman eagle over Napoleon's box was covered with a white sheet that swayed with the hot wind raised by the applause.

Alexander left the box unnoticed in the half-darkness as soon as the curtain rose before the second act of *The Vestal Virgin*.

The lamps were being put out, and a perspiring crowd thronged in the corridors, clattering their swords and sabres, when a pale gentleman in a black swallow-tail coat quickly climbed into Napoleon's box and pulled down the sheet. It came down over the chairs. The unknown man hit the eagle's outspread wings with an iron stick.

Pieces of gilded plaster curled in the shape of feathers, eagle's claws holding sheafs of Imperial lightning, dropped to the floor of the hall, striking against the lamps.

People crowded in the doorway, someone stood

on a chair, someone laughed or sobbed in the semi-darkness. A perspiring general in a Russian Guards uniform shouted from the stalls:

"Royalist, émigré—whatever you may be—it's a mean thing to do. . . . Leave the eagle of victories alone. . . . Hey, take that vile wretch off the eagle."

Russian grenadiers pulled the unknown man by his feet off Napoleon's box and led him under escort to the guardroom.

II

Captains Yengolytchev and Poltoratsky and Quartermaster Zhigar of the Hussars sat on horseback watching the entry of His Most Christian Majesty King Louis XVIII into Paris.

Poltoratsky—small, fair-haired, and blue-eyed, a great teaser—had been laughing all the way at the fat and gouty Louis in his shabby robe embroidered with Bourbon lilies, who had managed at last to reach Paris in his rickety coach, with the Allied Armies supporting him.

National Guards lined both sides of the Rue Richelieu. The hussars could see the discoloured backs of their blue uniforms and the white straps of the cartridge pouches.

Carpets and, here and there, white Bourbon ban-

ners embroidered with lilies hung out of windows. The slender lilies, transparent in the sun, swayed sadly and gracefully in the wind.

Louis XVIII was driving in an open coach. His Majesty wore a blue uniform with the white star of the Saint Esprit. A blue ribbon lay across the folds of his white satin overcoat.

There was a cloudy halo round his powdered head, so like the heads that the knife of the guillotine used to sever, mixing blood with the powder.

The King was nodding and smiling. His plump, clean-shaven face looked shiny in the sunlight. The Duchess of Angoulême, daughter of Louis XVI, sat opposite him in the carriage. The pale duchess in her morning attire looked like a black bird. She did not smile or nod to anyone. Her husband, Prince de Condé, had a nervous tic in his cheek.

Occasional voices in the crowd called out as though in alarm: "Long live the King! . . . " A strange array of white-robed vestals—young girls from the best French families—walked beside the King's carriage.

The King's slow entrance was like a sad and poverty-stricken religious procession. A detachment of Royal Guards appeared behind the carriage: they were marching in close formation, keeping step impatiently as though trying to hurry the King's carriage. The marks on their coats and knapsacks

showed where Napoleon's eagles had been taken off. The crowd brightened up.

"Long live the Guard!—long live France!"

Poltoratsky was no longer joking about the absurd-looking King. He drew a long face and backed his horse.

"Let's be off. . . . Old-fashioned lilies and powdered wigs evidently don't suit the Paris of to-day."

The hussars moved away along the Tuileries fence.

The crowd looked at them with mocking curiosity: they seemed like a sheaf of gold beside the iron fence. In their yellow cloaks and tunics jauntily hanging from one shoulder the Russians looked rather fine. Only their Moscow shakos were too heavy.

Quartermaster Zhigar, with a black moustache and a silver ring in his ear, was thought to be the commanding officer. Somebody touched his blue, gold-braided breeches, while somebody else fingered Poltoratsky's sabretache on seven long straps.

An old man politely patted Zhigar's horse on the chest, leaving a mark of his five fingers on its moist neck, and explaining with an air of a connoisseur that this was the famous steed of the steppes.

Zhigar carefully drew his foot away, afraid of pricking somebody with his spur.

"Your honour, they are tugging at my boot,

positively. . . . They must have gone off their heads."

"Of course they have. . . . Don't you worry."

With a dazzling smile Poltoratsky unfastened his shako. Strands of fair hair were blown across his thin cheeks.

"Why is your hair so fair?" someone called gaily in the crowd.

"Because of the snow."

"Are you going to burn Paris?"

"I don't know."

"Please don't burn it; it would be a shame."

"I won't burn it."

"See, that hussar has a ring. . . . They wear rings in Moscow. He's a handsome man, that hussar with the scar."

A girl in a white dress with green spots clapped her hands. Brown ringlets at her temples bobbed up and down.

"She is talking of you, Pasha," Poltoratsky said, smiling.

Yengolytchev, as though understanding what had been said, hid his swarthy finger with a golden Tatar ring and blushed crimson.

A white banner with three royal lilies was already flapping on the Vendôme column. Soldiers of the Preobrazhensky Regiment surrounded it.

The yellow hussars were threading their way

alongside the fence. Poltoratsky was politely asking the crowd to let them pass.

"They are polite, these golden hussars from savage Moscow."

"Have you any swans in Russia?" someone asked.

"How can we have swans when the water is frozen all the year round, and the ground covered with snow!"

The crowd was sympathetic.

"How do you plough and sow, then?"

"We plough the snow, sow seed in it, and the snow bears corn."

"Oh, Lord, what a country!"

The girl with the ringlets looked at the hussars with pity. Yengolytchev did not understand French. His black brows that met in the middle moved perplexedly. He looked sideways at the crowd.

Black-haired, muscular, swarthy, with eyes close together, Yengolytchev was rather like a wild horse.

In his squadron he was known as a duellist and a good judge of dogs and horses. He could argue passionately about the merits of thoroughbreds, he did not care for cards, he spent a long time saying his prayers in the evening, and smoked extremely strong tobacco. When angry he flew into such fury that the hussars caught him by the elbows to knock his sword out of his hand: in his rage he used to hack at the walls, mirrors, and furniture.

There was a grey scar across his face, from the temple to the cheek—it was a sabre cut, a memory of Kulm. He was shy and churlish with women, and confessed to his friend—Misha Poltoratsky—after a night of drinking at Vilkovishki, that best in the world he loved the Tsar, the Izyum Hussars, his horse Phœbus, and his peasant nurse, old Kilikia, who ruled over his Tambov village, and to this day sharply pulled his ear for his hussar naughtiness, as she said. There had been nothing shameful in his young life, no sinful love, and he was as chaste as a monk. They had nicknamed him "Centaur" in the squadron.

On the bridge he caught up Poltoratsky and asked, smiling shyly:

"Is it true, Misha, that that French girl said something about me?"

"She did."

"What?"

"That you are handsome."

"Don't tell fibs."

Centaur was offended and reined in his horse.

III

The Izyum squadron occupied a private house in the Rue de Bourgogne, with blue wallpaper studded with golden bees; saddle-bags, horse cloths, and hus-

sar holsters were heaped in the corners, on chiffoniers, and arm-chairs.

In the small courtyard with its crumpled brass fountain there were heaps of curved swords, sabretaches, and saddles, worn and shiny, with the letter "A" burnt out in the yellow leather.

The horses stood on the straw, shifting their feet and munching softly. The hussars had finished lunch, and lay down under the awning with their shakos for pillows, their faces covered with their grey cloaks, and only their boots with rusty spurs exposed to the sun.

The men on duty, in yellow sleeveless jackets, sat in the shade, close to the bags of oats, playing cards. A flock of white pigeons boldly fluttered over the spilt oats. Zhigar frightened them away; jingling his spurs, the quartermaster led three horses to the fountain.

Poltoratsky and Zhigar had bay stallions—lean, glossy, and muscular, with white marks on the head —but Yengolytchev's Phœbus was a heavy, long-legged horse, with brown marks on the stomach and a bluish stamp on the crupper. The horses eagerly dilated their nostrils, blowing at the sunlit water. Zhigar whistled encouragingly.

The commanding officer had fined those who were late with an extra glass of champagne. The wine made Poltoratsky turn pale and his blue eyes sparkled

—when Poltoratsky was drunk he laughed continually and kissed everyone affectionately, shutting his eyes like a girl. Centaur refused to eat oysters.

There was laughter at the table. The yellow coats were unbuttoned, the shirt sleeves rolled up so as to dip more conveniently into the common bowl. All were smoking amber or cherry pipes, letting out clouds of smoke.

Stepan Mertvago was telling at the top of his voice his new anecdote about a Prussian sergeant who lost his trousers near Paris. Mertvago's red head seemed to be steaming. Tchapega and old Engel were having a heated argument about Austerlitz.

Poloratsky was sitting on the sofa, Turkish fashion, the collar of his red silk shirt thrown open. Rocking to and fro, he sang to himself the sad, drawn-out notes of a chorus:

"That steed, swifter than the desert wind."

Mertvago glanced at the singer sideways, with his mouth half open; Centaur's eyes sparkled as he fumbled in his tobacco pouch. Poltoratsky went on:

"Now lies dead upon the burning sand."

Bald-headed old Engel grinned, showing his tobacco-stained teeth. Tchapega jauntily waved his pipe; Centaur and Mertvago looked right into the

singer's mouth, and all joined in eagerly and discordantly, beating measure with their feet:

"Young Zara, as shy as a timid gazelle,
Bloomed like a palm in the flowering dale."

Pigeons flew up in the yard. The soldier on duty raised a greasy card, twitched his moustache, and said:

"Aha!"

His partner covered a seven with an ace of diamonds and shook his head.

"They are singing Zara . . . of course."

At dusk cases of champagne were sent down into the courtyard for the whole squadron, while the officers made punch in the dining-room.

They stood in silence round the table, crossing their swords over the punch-bowl. A blue flame flickered on the young faces and the sword blades.

Yengolytchev lay down on the window-seat, smoking his pipe. The street lamp among the chestnuts opposite was already burning with a pale, trembling light.

"Poltoratsky shouldn't joke about that French girl. As though she would smile at me! . . . Women are queer creatures. . . . I expect she is no weight at all. . . . She is like Psyche, in her white tunic and little white shoes. . . . They were

tied with tapes to her ankles like Greek sandals. . . . She is just a silly girl."

And suddenly Yengolytchev saw his Psyche running past the fence. Her flimsy frock was blowing in the wind, her straw hat with a curved brim had slipped off and hung on her back, knocking against her as she ran. Two dragoons were chasing Psyche, holding their swords to prevent them rattling.

"I am dreaming," Centaur thought, and his face looked dark and menacing as in battle. "No, I am not."

He jumped on to the window-sill, swung himself over, and disappeared.

He fell into the dust like a cat, shook himself, and, limping, caught up the two dragoons. Breathing heavily he pushed back his moist hair.

The French girl drew back from him, but, suddenly, recognised him, leaned against his shoulder. Centaur pushed her to the wall, and, lowering his head, advanced towards one of the dragoons.

"Do you see this?" he said through his teeth, raising a swarthy fist to the man's heavy face.

The dragoon shook his head like a bull and swore under his breath in a mixture of Polish and German.

"And do *you* see it?" Centaur asked the other man.

The other dragoon stepped back, gripping the hilt of his sword.

"Your sword!" Centaur cried, and, pulling at it, tore it right off, sheath and all, with buttons, leather straps, and a piece of white cloth.

"I'll give it you!"

And he raised the heavy Austrian sword over their heads. Knocking against each other the dragoons rushed away from the grinning hussar.

He threw down the sword, which clanked against the wall, and turned to the girl his half-gypsy, half-Tatar face. Quick lightnings seemed to pass through it.

Such was the first meeting of Pavel Yengolytchev, subaltern officer of the Izyum Hussar Regiment, with Ginette Dorfey, whose father was Colonel of the glorious 17th Regiment of the line in Napoleon's Army. It was only when they had reached her house that Ginette noticed the thick dust on one side of the Moscow hussar's yellow coat. She flicked it off with her handkerchief. They both laughed; neither understood a word of what the other said.

It suddenly came on to rain. Young chestnut trees rustled behind the house fence. Screaming gaily, the girl, holding up her skirts, ran up the narrow wooden staircase.

Centaur stood by the steps in the rain, shaking his head and smiling. When he returned to the hussars, his dark-skinned face was wet with the rain and his eyes were shining.

"Give me champagne, brothers. I am simply parched."

Poltoratsky, distinctly drunk, stretched across the table through clouds of smoke and pressed his palms against Centaur's cheeks:

"Pasha, friend, where have you been?"

"Let me go, I want more drink."

Centaur raised the ice-cold goblet of golden wine and, throwing back his head, drank in noisy gulps.

IV

Yengolytchev and Poltoratsky were Izyum Hussars.

Although their combined ages numbered little more than fifty years, narrow strips of bristly whisker grew on their fresh cheeks, their brows were no longer smooth, and their lips were as firmly closed as those of the ancient Romans. But the pure light of youth shone in their eyes.

Seen across the mist of a century, the laurel-wreathed, victorious troops of Alexander seem an army of stern giants, and the rustle of the Russian banners that swept across Europe is as terrifying as a winter storm.

But in 1814 the infantry of the Syzran Regiment, who used to dry their hemp shirts on long poles in Paris courtyards, the Cossacks, and the smart-look-

ing Guards brought with them to Paris a peculiar atmosphere of cheerful freshness and rustic simplicity; a fresh, humble smell came from the regimental kitchens and laundries, from rusty-looking, square-toed boots that had tramped thousands of miles, from the worn shakos and coats.

The Russian troops brought to Paris an atmosphere of light warmth, of blue horizons, and far-off smoke—a smell of cloth and hay, of healthy peasant bodies, tobacco, kvass, rye head, birch twigs, and steaming bath-houses—the soldierly smell of Peter the Great's Imperial Russia.

Paris soon grew fond of the Emperor Alexander's fair-haired, blue-eyed soldiers, always ready to show their white teeth in a smile, and to walk in the middle of the road with an arm round a comrade when slightly drunk. Laughing like children, they used to spin tops in the regimental courtyards till the first stars came out, and when it was bedtime they dropped asleep side by side like children tired out with playing. Paris liked their rustic smell and good-humoured laughter, their strange games and dances.

Only the staffs and the aristocratic part of the Russian army—the brilliant Petersburg Guards—could speak French; the provincial Russian gentry—men like Yengolytchev, whose childhood had been spent between the servants' hall, the dovecot, and

the woods—had learnt such a peculiar French from their foreign tutors, addicted to snuff and drink, that it was of little use to them.

Poltoratsky soon began gathering round him in the Palais-Royal a crowd of gay Paris nymphs. After oysters, champagne, and roast chestnuts, he would recite to them Parny's licentious odes and elegies in the accents of the old French nobility. The little blue-eyed hussar with his dazzling smile had been nicknamed "Blue Tit" by his French friends.

All the way from Moscow he had carried in his knapsack small volumes of Parny, Montesquieu, and Voltaire. They knocked against one another violently during battles when Poltoratsky, clenching his teeth and pale with ecstasy, flew to the attack with his regiment.

"Europe has given many bumps and bruises to my philosophers," he said, laughing. "It's usual for these authors to bang their heads together in my knapsack."

The Emperor Alexander's regiments included all classes of Russian manhood—black-haired generals of Borodino with keen, lively eyes; provincial officers in love with their invincible Empire and its Tsar; a small circle of Petersburg Guards, talking on the quiet, with slight mockery and a French accent, of Freemasons and the Republican golden age; Mos-

cow recruits who sang the Lord's Prayer with pure, gentle voices in front of the ranks; and the smart soldiers of the Guards. Then there were the bristly-cheeked veterans, long-legged, bony old men, rude to their superiors, always grumbling, fond of steam baths and hot spiced drinks—the grey-headed veterans of "Father" Suvorov. They used to tell in the evenings of the Alps and the campaigns of long ago; of how, when they came down from the snows and glaciers into the valleys, their uniforms were licy and in rags, no one had any boots, neither soldiers nor generals, and all had grown beards like peasants —"even the illustrious Suvorov's comely face was covered with bristles that looked like snow."

Alexander's regiments, marvelling at their own brilliant victories and the glories of Europe, brought into Paris, like new Gauls, an atmosphere of joyful vigour, a breath of morning freshness.

No one had expected what happened, and they least of all—the sunburnt and fair-haired conquerors of the world.

Badly hammered at Borodino, they had hardly recovered their breath when they had to chase the enemy on his way from burning Moscow. The new Titan was merely trying his strength: the Russian army rushed desperately into attack, then retreated in a panic, running away like a crowd of children at the sight of the French Old Guard in the snow;

but re-forming their ranks once more, they flew in pursuit with a joyful roar. It was as though they fell to the ground only to rise again refilled with vital force.

At Borodino they struggled in despair with the Conqueror of the World, and at the Berezina they did not understand that they were fighting merely his shadow. But when they did understand, they dashed after him, intoxicated by their sudden victory, overwhelming everything on their way—fortresses, capitals, kingdoms.

A new Cæsar had arisen in the East, a sudden light had dawned over the world, and in its rays Napoleon seemed a dwarfed vanishing shadow: that new sun was Alexander.

And Alexander's children occupied the capital of the world.

Paris accepted them, Paris liked the good-natured barbarians: they were not even aware of their own fresh beauty and perfect health.

When those jolly rustics arrived, they went about from house to house with their billeting papers, grinning gaily, and good-humoredly saying what sounded like:

"*Bête, bête.*"

The landladies complained to the Russian officers about the men's rudeness, and it had to be explained that the soldiers were not abusing them but merely

asking for beds; they had learnt the word "Bett" in Germany.

In the market-place, under the awnings of booths with apples and brown gingerbreads that looked like Moscow honey-cakes, Russian Guardsmen soon learned, in answer to the amiable stall-keeper's questions, to answer boldly with a knowing wink:

"*Comme-ça.* . . . And another half *comme-ça*, please, madame."

The little French milliners kept company with the Russian giants for the pleasure of listening to their singing. The blue-eyed and brown-eyed soldiers sang, lightly nudging the girls with their elbows:

"Madam, will you sit by me?
Madam, will you look at me?"

And then pretending to jump away, answered with a provoking laugh:

"No, no, be off—don't you pester me!"

The French liked the song, and without understanding a word of it began to join in, singing and whistling. Before long all the Paris restaurants, fairs, and merry-go-rounds knew what the Russians meant by *wein-wein* and *beerlagoot*! This word was the first used by the drummer of the Archangel Regiment, who ingeniously combined what German

and French he knew to ask for a drink; he was an unsatisfactory soldier, but very clever with his tongue. The barmen decided that "beerlagoot" meant *vodka* in Russian, and Russian soldiers thought that it meant it in French. In the darkness of the boulevards it was enough for a soldier in a glistening shako to cough significantly and say "trick-track," twirling his moustache—and a Paris nymph put her arm through his, and they hurriedly walked away on their own business. Under the grey vaults of Notre Dame the Russians walked about on tiptoe in the purplish-orange twilight, holding their shakos under their arms. They shook their heads rather like horses, crossed themselves in front of the altar, and looked at everything with joyful interest.

They visited the Sorbonne, the factories, the old palaces. They went to hear the lectures of Monsieur Benjamin Constant.

And perhaps on the very day when the Russian grenadiers in their white gaiters sat in a flock on the broad steps of the Madeleine—the Grand Army's temple of glory—the stern English general, Wellington, wrote from Paris to London: "I must say that what I like best here are the grenadiers of the Russian Army."

V

Only two comrades of Afrikan Zimin, who died in a madhouse in the reign of the Emperor Paul, had come unscathed through innumerable battles: Corporal, or, as he was now called, Sergeant Akim Govoruhin, a quiet elderly man with reddish whiskers turning grey, very devout, and a great reader of the Bible; and Mihailo Perekrestov, a tall, dark young man who had on that night in March handed water to the Emperor Paul's widow.

There had been Larion, the singer, but he disappeared somewhere near Moscow. Nor was there any news of Rodion Stepanitch, the old man with the stammer. He was far away with his white dog, on a secret and important mission. And Kaleveinen, the drummer, had been hit by a cannon ball in the battle of Leipzig. In a light airy room in the French barracks, two beds had been placed for Govoruhin and Perekrestov behind a partition, with blankets and fine sheets as though for gentlemen; many of the foreign gentry in Paris went to have a look at the Russian Guards, and the grenadiers were kept in comfort and cleanliness, as though they were pampered flunkeys and not soldiers brought up in the smoke of battles.

Akim fixed over his bed an ikon of St. Nicolas, and underneath it a blue sanctuary-lamp he had bought

for two Polish *groscy* at Vilno. A blue light filtered through the glass of the lamp.

Akim sat in the corner reading a shabby Bible. He wore a white shirt and the soldier's red tie; the ends of his tin spectacles were tied together with a string. Young Mihailo was out all day. He came home in the evening and lay down on his bed. Akim held with his finger the place he had been reading—so as not to lose the holy word—and pushing up his round spectacles said reproachfully:

"You've brought the smell of tobacco in with you again, Misha."

"Yes, uncle, I did smoke a pipe."

"You're getting spoiled."

"I only smoked one."

"One! And then you'll have a drink of wine, and stake five copecks at cards, and then you'll need money to buy some girl a kerchief—and presently our Misha will get into trouble and come in for a sound thrashing. . . . You're picking up bad habits. You've grown slack."

"True enough."

Mihailo laughed as he took off his coat. White cartridge pouches hung over the beds on pegs, and the shakos stood on a shelf by the window.

Mihailo turned with his face to the wall, pretending to be asleep. But he could not sleep. Akim blew out the candle, but Mihailo could not sleep.

His eyes looked bright in the darkness, and Akim heard him stirring.

After listening for a time, Akim called to him:

"Misha!"

"Yes, uncle."

"Can't you sleep?"

"No, I can't."

"I say, you've forgotten to take off your gaiters. Mind you don't smear those fine sheets with grease. Our officers wouldn't like that. . . ."

"No, indeed." Mihailo sat up and hastily took off his gaiters. The sanctuary-lamp shed a blue light, and shadows flickered by St. Nicolas's stern lips.

"The reason you don't sleep," Akim said, "is because your mind is uneasy. You are thinking all sort of thoughts—I can see that. Take care. I have told you, a soldier must keep himself pure. God expects more of us than of monks, maybe. If your heart is pure, you have no fear, and there can be no punishment. You see, we soldiers are the first to go to God from this world, and we do not know the hour when we may have to go—death may be upon us any moment. . . . Keep out of temptation's way. A soldier must be free from the lusts of the flesh. That's been the rule for all good soldiers ever since our Father Suvorov's day. Take care."

"But then, uncle . . . I didn't take care."

"Why didn't you, Mihailo?"

"I simply didn't, and that's all about it."

The young man looked at the lamp before the ikon. Both were silent.

"Are you asleep, uncle?" Mihailo asked.

"No."

"What a noise in the streets. . . . Lights everywhere. . . . It's a confusing town, and such a lot of people."

"We've seen towns before. We'll stay here for a bit, and then go. Towns are not a home for soldiers, but simply a stage on their road."

"I've been walking among the booths. . . . There's a merry-go-round there, with bells on it."

"Well?"

"Nothing. It goes round."

"Let it. You'd better go to sleep."

"I'll sleep. There's nothing the matter with me. . . . And, you know, they say there are no serfs here at all, but everyone is free."

"Perhaps they are. . . . But men are everywhere the same."

There was a pause. Putting his hands behind his head, Mihailo looked at the blue flame.

"I keep thinking . . . I think about our soldiers and about Paris. . . . My head's all in a turmoil.

And I wonder, too, where our Rodion Stepanitch is now, with his dog."

"Oh, wandering about. . . . You needn't bother about him."

"But perhaps he is dead?"

"Dead! Nonsense you talk. . . . Had he died or lost the dog we should have heard of it. He promised to send us word. When the day comes he will find the Tsar and tell him the truth about his father's bitter death: we were witnesses, and we have preserved His Majesty's dog. But if there is no news of Rodion Stepanitch, it means he is on the tramp."

"I am a bit dazed—what with the campaign, and the town, and the crowds. . . . Ah, I'll go to the merry-go-rounds to-morrow."

In the morning Akim scraped with a crooked blade the reddish bristles off his chin till his skin looked shiny, and sat down on his bed wriggling his big bony toes.

Mihailo was standing in the sun by the window, rubbing his brass shako with a piece of cloth and singing. His black, curly hair was still wet with washing.

"So our Misha is off on the spree again," Akim said disapprovingly. "I can see where he is going."

"Where, uncle?" The young corporal turned

round, holding a boot in one hand and a brush in the other.

"Misha is after a girl, I know. . . . It's true there's no escaping from a woman, soldier or no soldier. Woman is sweet as honey—the strongest creature on earth. . . . No wonder you have bells and merry-go-rounds in your head. Couldn't steer clear of a girl!"

Mihailo grinned, showing his white teeth and blushed crimson.

VI

As Count Stroganov's aide-de-camp, Koshelev had been in the same carriage with the count during the march. Koshelev's arm was in a black sling: in one of the battles a bullet had smashed the bone.

Koshelev looked older after his Moscow experiences; there was a gleam of secret anxiety in his greenish eyes and something shy, thoughtful, and deliberate in all his words and movements. He did his work conscientiously, almost pedantically, careful to preserve, as it were, every detail of the life to which he had returned on that foggy November day when the drummer-boys beat the tattoo under the regimental Colours by the wooden bridge. He seemed to look into every face without quite recognising it; it was as though he were searching for something.

He did not make friends with anyone. Many thought him strange and said that he had not recovered from the Moscow fire and his captivity, that he had married in Moscow the daughter of some obscure tradesman, that he said his prayers at night in a loud whisper, and that he was stingy, proud, and unsociable.

And, indeed, after many months of a victorious campaign, Koshelev could not forget the sense of uneasiness that had possessed him in burning Moscow. The Russian victories, the conquest of Paris itself, seemed to him uncertain and unreal, like a beautiful mirage. He could not account for this uneasiness, but it seemed to him as though the fire meant the end not only of the old Moscow but of the old Russia as well.

It was only from his wife, Paraskeva Savvishna, that he did not conceal his curious, uncontrolled fear for Russia. Nor did he conceal from her his feeling of guilt about that Sofyushka Zaharyin, of whose fate he had vainly tried to learn something in Moscow and in the provinces. He longed to meet her, but never did. "God watches over us all, in all things, and always"—these words of his wife were the only thing that comforted him.

He was living in a state of secret fear. He was so shaken by what he had seen in the fire that he could have no confidence in anything; it all seemed to him

uncertain and unreal by comparison with something true and inevitable he had had a glimpse of in Moscow. That was why he prayed at night in a loud whisper, as old soldiers do; and all his prayers were about being spared, about the cup passing from him, about his wife, about peace, about Russia.

This suppressed anxiety made his eyes unnaturally bright, and his strange reserve kept his comrades away from him. His uneasiness and his fear for Russia made him, as it were, not an active member but a silent witness of the campaign—a stranger to the life to which he had returned. But the strain relaxed—like a sail that droops when there is no wind—whenever a packet of letters from Moscow in rough blue envelopes was brought to the office of the regiment.

Dear Parasha's simple-hearted letters—how he loved them, how he longed for them! The very sight of the round, sloping handwriting and the misspelt words brought him peace and rest.

Smoothing out the blue sheets of paper on his sleeve, he read the Moscow letters with a slow smile that seemed to light up his face as he bent over them.

"It is seven o'clock, and the morning promises a lovely day," his wife wrote. "If only my heart were as light as the dawning day! Oh, I am sad, my joy, at your being so far away on the campaign! I do

not see you, and I do not hear your voice, but I am beside you. God keep and preserve you. Your wife and faithful friend till death,

"PARASKEVA KOSHELEV."

Count Pavel Alexandrovitch Stroganov more than once found his aide-de-camp reading those letters and the Gospel.

During the march Koshelev often opened his pocket Bible and read at random. When he read his favourite chapters of St. John and St. Mark, a feeling of youth, of sudden joy, always came upon him, and the message of the Resurrection was like a wave of morning light. And again, as many years ago in Petersburg, he thought that the earth and all the works of man, he himself and Parasha, were not free and could achieve nothing, but that the only power at work in the world was the mysterious will of God.

Count Pavel Alexandrovitch Stroganov liked the shy, reserved young man, and had chosen him for his aide-de-camp. From their leisurely conversations during the journey he soon came to know about Parasha and her letters, about the Gospel reading, and a great many other things. He had made friends with Koshelev while they were still in Germany.

Koshelev used to tell him of his sufferings in the

fire of Moscow and as a prisoner of the French, as though expecting an answer or an explanation from the quiet, stout man who sat beside him, blinking and stroking his round knee with his plump hand.

One evening, when the carriage windows were dim with rain, Stroganov broke his humble silence.

"So that was what you saw in Moscow," he said. "An image, as it were, of a terrible rebellion. . . ."

"How do you mean?"

"Yes, that was it," the count said, evidently answering his own thoughts. "A rebellion or a revolution. Perhaps I could make my meaning clearer to you by an example taken from the Freemasons. This visible word is nothing but a succession of symbols. The hidden images of the future are revealed to the inquiring eye in the transitory images of the present; to-day is, so to speak, the shadow cast by the morrow. It is the same with the fire of Moscow. . . . Is it not a symbol of a more terrible conflagration that is destined to consume our country?"

"I don't understand."

"Listen, then, to the story of a strange life—my life—and my meaning may seem clearer to you."

No one but Count Pavel's son, young Count Alexander, knew his father's secret history, concealed from the rest of his family.

Théroigne de Méricourt—that was in 1789.

Count Pavel Alexandrovitch Stroganov, who had just turned eighteen, was staying in Revolutionary Paris with his tutor, Monsieur Gilbert Romme—a hunchback with cold, expressionless eyes, a fine mathematician and a passionate Jacobin. In Paris Romme was engaged in drawing up a Republican calendar, and in the old days had helped the Petersburg sculptor, Falconett, in his calculations for the monument of Peter the Great; had advised him, as though for the sake of balance, to put a mysterious symbol—a crushed serpent—under the feet of the bronze Horseman.

The fair-haired young Russian aristocrat, with his pale, sleepy face, looking very tall in his cornflower-blue coat, was a conspicuous figure in the Jacobin clubs and among the revolutionary crowds.

At that time the representative of the Russian Empress, State Councillor Simolin, was still in Paris. He had written to the old Count Stroganov that his son's tutor, Romme, "took the young man entrusted to him to Jacobin clubs, the object of which was to make the people rise everywhere against the authorities."

But Count Pavel walked among the frantic crowds with calm curiosity. Romme took him every day to Versailles to hear the wild speeches of the National Assembly; on the feast of the Federation they spent a full twenty-four hours in the Champs de Mars,

and the hunchback in his smart black coat with lace ruffles caught a severe chill.

In a Jacobin club of the Friends of the Law, Citizen Romme—later to become President of the Convention that sentenced the King of France to death—introduced his pupil, the Russian count, to a tall, graceful girl, Théroigne de Méricourt. She was dark and rosy, with restless hazel eyes and a mole above her fresh lips.

Théroigne was the Joan of Arc of the Revolutionary Paris, the amazon of the rebel mob. She had led the crowds, she had stormed the Bastille. She used to wear in those days a short blue velvet cloak, a red coat, a round hat with a *tricouleur,* and pistols in her belt.

The count was struck by the Frenchwoman's wild beauty. The light of her hazel eyes dazzled him. When her warm hand pressed his, he felt as though a storm burst over him, as though a shaft of lightning passed through him. Following the mad hazel eyes, Count Pavel rushed into the very thick of the Revolution. He began to see Paris differently—the very sky above it seemed to him Théroigne's flaming red coat. Wearing a Jacobin knitted cap, the Russian count ran after her everywhere, not noticing that in the crush he had lost all the pearl buttons off his blue coat and that his stockings were wrinkled. The Jacobins carried tattered trousers about on sticks

by way of banners, and Théroigne rode with the crowd. Count Stroganov ran beside her stirrup with his musket, singing the rebels' stirring songs. He never knew where they were running or what would happen; he only gazed into her mad, sparkling eyes.

Gilbert Romme, who was President of the club, "Friends of the Law," soon offered the count the post of club librarian, under the name of Citizen Otchero; Théroigne was in charge of the club's archives. In August 1790 the Russian Jacobin, Otchero, was given a Jacobin diploma signed by Barnave himself—a rough sheet of paper with green lictor's rods and a Phrygian cap painted on it, a wax seal with the red lilies of the Revolution, and the motto: "To live free or to die."

Count Pavel Stroganov and Théroigne de Méricourt held their short trysts in the quiet library overlooking the garden, by a bookshelf hung with green taffeta where dust was settling on a bust of Plutarch.

Only the blind Plutarch saw Count Pavel unfasten her belt and throw the heavy pistols away; he was the only witness of their greedy, hurried caresses.

Stroganov was eighteen, Théroigne was over thirty. He was in love.

On a wet December night in 1790 a heavy blue chaise on red wheels, covered with German and

Polish mud, was drawn into Paris by six horses. Young Novosiltsev had come from Moscow to fetch the Jacobin Otchero, the bewitched Russian count.

Vows of friendship were exchanged, tears were shed in the night; young Novosiltsov may have said that it was the count's duty to work for Republican freedom and equality at home and not in Paris, and to free the thousands of his bearded serfs; that the count had grown slovenly and untidy and smelt like a Paris *sansculotte,* although he bore a noble title and coat of arms and had his family's honour to think of. And perhaps he told him, too, that Count Pavel's old father locked himself away from the servants, shedding bitter tears in solitude; that lime trees were sweetly flowering in Moscow as of old, and flocks of pigeons were still fed in the morning on the steps of Vassili Blazhenny. Whatever he may have said, at daybreak the footmen helped Count Pavel into the carriage and closed the doors. The young man was pale and looked about him sadly.

The red wheels that the servants had not had time to wash clean from German and Polish mud rattled on the cobblestones.

Citizen Otchero left Paris with a passport for the Russian Empire, for far-off Moscow.

VII

In one of the last battles to be fought for the possession of Paris, Count Stroganov lost his son Alexander; the boy had his head blown off by a cannon ball.

Koshelev, distressed at the terrible news, did all he could to lighten Count Pavel's grief. He felt profound affection and pity for this quiet, middle-aged man with his extraordinary past.

The count's heavy carriage turned back: he was going to take his son's oaken coffin to Russia.

Stroganov did not show his grief to other people. His longish face grew finer and more spiritual; he seemed to have withdrawn into himself. Two sharp lines appeared at the corners of his mouth, his hands grew thinner, and the skin on them looked flabby, like an old man's.

To break the silence on the journey, Koshelev read his wife's letters to the count. Carefully moving his arm in the black sling, he undid the flat brass buttons of his uniform and drew out a velvet bag he wore round his neck, containing the blue letters in which the very mistakes in spelling were a joy to him.

Count Pavel listened to him, gazing out of the carriage window. Koshelev had finished one letter when suddenly the count rolled his grey-blue eyes

as though his breath failed him, and broke into sobs; the leather cushions of the seat shook with his heavy body. Koshelev huddled up in his corner. The sobs grew louder, and tears streamed down the count's face. The enamelled military cross on his neck glistened with tear-drops. After a time the sobs subsided, and he wept quietly. Then with a handkerchief he wiped his face, the enamelled cross, and gold-embroidered collar of his coat, blew his nose loudly, straightened his white waistcoat, and combed back his thin hair.

They drove on in silence for an hour or two. The day was passing into evening. The cool glow of sunset was reflected on their hands that rested on their knees.

"Forgive me," said the count. "Forgive me for interrupting your reading. . . . I did not want anyone to see my despair . . . but my heart was very heavy. I am better now. I shall be strong. Tell the coachman to stop at Headquarters. I must take leave of the Tsar before I go home."

Koshelev pulled the communication-cord and gave the orders to the driver. There was another long pause.

"My son used to think that Théroigne might be still alive," the count said suddenly. "I had the same thought. That was the secret I shared with my dear boy. He had hoped to witness our meeting in

Paris. . . . But it was not to be. All whom I loved have gone. . . . And something tells me I, too, shall never see Paris again."

Count Stroganov seemed to find relief in thoughtful conversation, though indeed for the most part he did all the talking. As Koshelev listened to his quiet, leisurely monologues, he fancied that the count was reciting poetry or muttering incantations. He hardly ever interrupted Stroganov.

"Paris. . . . It will remain to me for ever a symbol of rebellion. I early tasted there the great disillusionment of the Revolution. . . . The dreams of the Marats and Robespierres ended in nothing but slaughter. They had not even begun to be realised. But one can't help seeing that they had given rise to the wonderful Bonaparte—that artillery lieutenant's dreams have been realised completely, even more than he had hoped. . . . It is marvellous, indeed: destruction has led to construction, perdition —to victory; a revolution has built up an Empire. . . . It was not for nothing that Bonaparte compared himself to Peter the Great. . . . Peter's heritage was age-long disorder and trouble, but he transformed it into the Russian Empire. . . . It is a wonderful idea: continual transfiguration, perpetual victory over darkness. Peter's Empire means the overcoming of chaos through order, making the forces of chaos subservient to law. . . . This, too,

means a revolution, more formidable perhaps than that of Bonaparte. Everlasting struggle, continual transfiguration is the spirit of Russia, by which she lives and moves. . . . If our descendants haven't the courage to carry out Peter's design, Russia will fall. But are they likely to fail in courage?"

Count Stroganov turned to Koshelev so sharply that he startled him.

"No. . . . We are the children of Peter, of the ever-moving Russian storm. . . . You were talking about the fire of Moscow. Yes, the victory of fire and destruction would have been terrible had we not had Peter and Alexander. I believe in Alexander. . . . He knows my thoughts—but I have nothing except thoughts, while he has the whole Empire in his hands, its peoples, wars, and victories—its destiny. . . . I will not grieve for my son, since Alexander is leading Russia. He is lord of the world now; he has supplanted Napoleon. The sun of Russia is rising. I hope for the transformation of Peter's Empire into the new Empire of Alexander. That will comfort my stricken heart. . . ."

It was dark when the count's carriage and the covered cart with his son's coffin stopped in the square of a quiet French town where the Headquarters of the Russian Army were.

VIII

The Tsar's eyes looked very blue in the sun. His short-sighted, slightly prominent eyes were sometimes a transparent grey and sometimes a light blue.

Alexander loved the midday sun, the warmth, peace, and purity of a sunny day. He enjoyed the noonday hours, and all his thoughts and dreams, bred by the light and the stillness, were soothing and comforting.

It seemed to him that the sky was a vast dome filled with Divine light, and that without any effort on his or anyone else's part, without any noise or bustle, the world was rising of itself towards that sunlit height, restful and harmonious as a sunny noon when the leaves of acacias and ash trees, spell-bound, cease to rustle, and the air is filled with a sweet and melodious tremor. "Of itself"; that's just how everything had always happened to him, he thought. That was how the conquest of Paris, of which he now had no doubts, had taken place.

The Tsar loved the midday sun, and gave himself up to the enjoyment of it as though trying to warm the coldness, the weary indifference to everything, the lurking chill of death of which he had been conscious, with secret bitterness, in the very depths of his heart ever since his youth—since that night in March that began his reign.

Dressed in the white uniform of the Austrian Cuirassiers, Alexander, still fresh from his morning bath, was standing in the sunlight by the window, smoothing the golden hair at his temples with absent-minded pleasure.

Resting his hand on the cool marble top of the table that reflected as a mirror his lowered head, bald at the top, the Tsar was reading a small pocket Bible with gilt edges.

This reading gave him a particular kind of enjoyment, slightly exciting him and making him feel both humble and elated. It relieved the stale, weary feeling which the noise and bustle around him gave him, and which he disliked so much.

He was glad that no one suspected what he was reading, that it was his happy secret, and this was why he read the Psalms with a gentle half-smile that slightly lifted the corners of his lips.

He was glad that the prayers and songs of King David shed their light upon him here, in France, at the height of his victories, and that he could find defence for himself behind the clanking shield of the Psalmist's complaints, invocations, and ecstatic delight in his own weakness in the sight of the Lord.

Alexander was expecting Count Stroganov. He was glad to see him; it was a long time since he had seen his queer friend.

The Tsar had always felt secretly curious and even slightly envious of the friend of his early youth and his first sleepless nights—of the stout, pale, modest Count Pavel, the comrade of the French Montagnards, and at one time the happy lover, so the gossips said, of the famous Théroigne de Méricourt. And now Alexander felt sincerely sorry for the count's loss and his departure for Russia.

True, that middle-aged Jacobin and good commander of his grenadiers soon wearied him by his reflections and fruitless dreams that were always the same. Count Pavel had always lived in abstractions, and merely glided on the surface of life with his Jacobin phantoms.

The Tsar knew that the count's words would be slightly old-fashioned, fanciful, and unreal, but would as usual leave in his mind a pleasant and touching trace of dreams that never came true—or if they did come true it would be at some far-off time, "of themselves," without anyone's efforts—when Russia and the whole of mankind would merge into an harmonious dome of light and become perhaps the beautiful Republic of the count's imagination.

Alexander heard Stroganov's soft, even footsteps behind the white door. He put the English Bible into its leather case, and fastened the flat silver button of his coat, but immediately unfastened it again as well as another button by the collar: his old friend

should see that he was being received in a homely, unceremonious way.

Count Stroganov, in his Grenadier uniform, with a ribbon across his shoulder and decorations that jingled on his breast, came into the room, blotting out the sunlight on the parquet with his heavy figure. It was unusual to see him in full dress, and the stiff collar embroidered with golden laurels noticeably pressed on his double chin.

The Tsar stretched out both hands to him in welcome, and said, screwing up his eyes:

"I am sincerely glad to see you, Pavel Alexandrovitch. . . . Your loss is a genuine grief to me."

His mellow voice rang like gold. The count's cold, trembling fingers touched his large, warm hands. Stroganov turned slightly away. His cheek trembled.

"My son had honourably served his country and played his part in your victories."

The Tsar pressed his hand warmly, slightly drawing him towards himself.

"I beg Your Majesty's forgiveness, that in my sorrow——"

"Come, come, Pavel—why this formality, full dress, and decorations?"

He took the count by the arm and led him to the window. They both stood facing it—the Tsar, tall and stately in his white uniform, with a faint halo

that the sunshine made round his fair head, and Stroganov, also tall but heavily built, and dressed in dark colours. The soft line of their lips, their bald foreheads, and their eyelashes trembling with the sun made them rather alike. Count Pavel stood by the window like Alexander's shadow.

"You look older, much older, my poor Pavel."

The Tsar shook his head sadly and kindly.

"What does it matter so long as you are young?" Stroganov answered. "You have not changed. You are beautiful, Sire."

"There, there." The Tsar smiled and patted Stroganov on the back, flushing slightly at his sincere words. "It's a long time since you came to see your old friend, Pavel."

"It is only the memory of our sacred friendship that makes me trouble you now. There are a few reflections which I feel it my duty to put before you before I go to Russia."

The dull, even voice and the word "reflections" that promised a long speech made the Tsar feel slightly depressed, as in the old days of their friendship.

He put his arm round Stroganov's waist.

"Sit down, my friend. You know how I like listening to you, my peaceable Danton."

"Thank you, Sire."

Stroganov felt a touch of coldness in Alexander's

words, and drew away from him with a hardly perceptible movement.

"What a lovely day. . . . The sunshine . . . " the Tsar said absent-mindedly, screwing up his eyes.

He sat in an arm-chair with his legs crossed, and his hands clasped across his white waist-coat. His golden, slightly fluffy hair, his white, well-fitting stockings, and the tips of his shoes were bathed in sunshine.

Stroganov occupied the whole arm-chair with his heavy body. His uniform, ruffled on his back, was warmed by the sun. He drew a handkerchief out of his tail pocket. Drops of sweat stood out on his forehead.

"Sire, I consider it my duty," he began, breathing audibly as he struggled to find the words—"I consider it my duty to tell you what I think of the great and marvellous events that you have brought about, and that we have witnessed and taken part in —of this victory over Bonaparte, a victory truly blessed. . . . Death would not take me, and so I will bless the death of my son for the sake of your victory. . . ."

"Pavel, my dear!"

"Sire, you have conquered the world like a new Alexander, and stilled its storms. You have risen like a new sun over the nations."

"Pavel Alexandrovitch . . . " The Tsar's fore-

head flushed again at the count's sincere words. "You might be composing an ode! Such has been my country's fate, and my part in it is of the smallest. Please don't sing my praises, dear Pavel."

"Yes, Sire, if I could write poetry I would sing your praises in verse. . . . Russia's destiny has been accomplished—the Russian sun has risen."

With a jingle from his decorations, the count got up from the arm-chair, blotting out the sunlight on the parquet floor. The Tsar got up also, looking at the count in surprise.

"Alexander, you have conquered Bonaparte," Stroganov said firmly and solemnly.

"But have I?"

"You have. Paris and the whole of Europe is at your feet. Napoleon is no more. Alexander has now taken Napoleon's place. Truly, it is so."

Stroganov was breathing loudly. He passed his handkerchief over his sweat-bedewed cheeks and large nose.

"Yes, you have conquered him. . . . But, Sire, have you conquered the Revolution that nurtured him? Is your victory over Bonaparte a victory over Revolution?"

"What do you mean, dear Pavel?" The Tsar raised an eyebrow attentively.

"I think that the Corsican was a symbol of victory over the Revolution. He made use of the

forces of chaos and transformed them. You have conquered the conqueror of the Revolution, Sire."

"What are you driving at?"

"You have taken Napoleon's place, but do you know Napoleon's secret? Do you know how to save your country and the whole world from the eruption of chaotic forces, and transform the terrors of the Revolution into law and order?"

"So that's what you're thinking of." The Tsar pressed his palm to his lips as though wiping them—that was a characteristic movement of his when he was agitated. He smiled a quick smile of annoyance.

"Wait a bit, Pavel. . . . I confess I don't know. But I believe Napoleon did not know either. The beginning and the end are not within our grasp. The world is in God's hands."

"Forgive me, but humility is out of place here. . . . The world was in God's hands when the terrible French Revolution began. If a revolution broke out in Russia, the world would still be in God's hands. I was saying that Napoleon knew the secret. . . ."

"Napoleon, Napoleon . . . " The Tsar pursed up his thin lips and flushed angrily. "I've heard enough about him."

"Forgive me, Sire," Stroganov said humbly.

Alexander paced up and down the room with his

hands behind his back. Then he walked up to Stroganov and put his hand on his shoulder.

"You must forgive me, Pavel Alexandrovitch," he said.

The count's heavy chin trembled perceptibly.

"If I only knew how to tell you, Sire, our time has come—Russia's destiny is at stake. Just think of your incredible victory! Everything depends upon you, all are waiting for a sign from you—victorious troops, your loyal country, the nations of Europe, the whole world. . . . You have brought here not an army of serfs and their masters, but the true and free Russian people. In those victories your army has become a new, great, and sacred nation. It is only fitting that the victorious Russians who have established order in Europe should receive their due—liberty, citizenship, enlightenment, and freedom of conscience. . . . It is up to you to complete the work of Peter. Complete it! You are in truth your country's liberator. I see your lofty destiny, your blessed achievement."

Stroganov looked at Alexander as though he were seeing him for the first time, and his heavy frame trembled with ecstasy.

"My heart is full of grief and of doubt. . . . I wish I could see the world with your pure eyes, I wish I could believe that the world is in God's hands. But I see only chaos, inevitable revolution, the fall

of nations and empires. . . . The hour will strike, and then it will be too late, Sire."

Alexander was infected by Stroganov's emotion.

Suddenly Stroganov sank heavily down on to his knees, raising his arms above his head so that the blue lining showed under the red cloth of the cuffs.

"Cæsar, Cæsar, harness the forces of revolution to the chariot of the Empire! Have no fear—you can do it now, you are victorious. Make use of the prodigious energies that go to make revolutions in order to build up your Empire, and thus overcome for ever the danger of a revolution in Russia. Be fearless like Peter. Your peaceful task is easier to carry out than his. Give the people freedom, but encompass it with law. And then the sunlit quadriga of the Russian Empire will fly forward, safely crossing every precipice on the way. It is your task to make Russia greater than it has ever been. Have no fears—complete your work!"

Stroganov bowed down to the ground. His back and plump shoulders were shaking. Alexander, his eyes dark with emotion, tried to raise him by the arms. He touched the count's cheeks and his damp hair.

"Get up, Pavel—get up, for Heaven's sake!"

The count lifted his trembling face:

"Conqueror of Napoleon, give freedom to your country, wash away from it the stain of serf-

dom. . . . If you won't listen to me, listen to my son, who has given his life for you! How can you return to a land of serfdom? The destiny of the Empire is being decided at this moment—the destiny of Russia. . . ."

"Get up, I tell you!"

The Tsar stamped his foot on the parquet, and turning away from the count paced up and down the room.

Stroganov stood up and straightened his uniform. He wiped his face with his handkerchief, and blew his nose loudly. His soft lips were trembling.

Alexander came up to Stroganov from the far end of the room with noiseless steps.

"I have no fear," the Tsar said in a low voice. "I am not afraid. I fearlessly shouldered my grandmother's heavy heritage. I faced Bonaparte's invasion without fear. I am not afraid of my responsibility for Russia. I understand you. . . . I know what my task is. Yes, to give freedom, to give full play to the Russian genius—to harness, as you say, the forces of revolution to the chariot of the Empire. . . . I am longing to do it. I have longed for it ever since my youth. Look at me; am I speaking the truth?"

"Sire!"

"You see I am speaking the truth! You can cut off my arm if I am lying. . . . I am longing for it."

Suddenly the Tsar covered his face with his hands, his knees trembled, and he cried in a husky voice:

"Pavel—Pavel!"

"Your Majesty?"

The Tsar stared before him with his pale blue eyes, and with twitching lips said in a rapid whisper:

"He—my father—prevents me. . . . There is always a cold darkness before me. It makes my heart ache, it weakens me. I am like a thief. I don't believe in myself. I cannot. I want to believe in God, in His defence and forgiveness. God knows I am not guilty. . . ."

Alexander moved his hand across his eyes and saw Stroganov.

"You said—the destiny of the Empire. We don't know it. Don't attempt to guess it. I only know my own destiny. . . . I cannot guide your terrible quadriga, I am no Cæsar. The discordant voice of conscience torments me. I should like to leave everything, to grow a beard and go away, relinquishing my sceptre. . . What do I care for a sceptre? As to the Empire! . . . Since you go in for guessing secrets, tell me what is the secret of the letters on my father's Castle: 'Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever'? Had you forgotten his assassination? His blood is . . . on me."

They stood facing each other and yet far apart, each absorbed in what the other could not under-

stand. The Tsar turned his head to the count with a slow, graceful movement.

"Thank you for your straightforward, friendly words. . . . I believe that somehow, by the will of God, there shall be light and gracious peace in the world. Forgive me, my friend, I am tired. . . . I cannot . . . "

Alexander's voice broke; there was a dull, flat note in it now.

They embraced each other in silence, and Stroganov took his leave.

IX

That afternoon Koshelev was waiting for the count in the street. The warm spring day was drawing to its close, and the melting golden-coloured sky looked fathomless. Koshelev gazed into the transparent air in which the lilac belfry and the pointed roofs of the houses seemed to be floating. The upper storeys and the tops of the trees were still bathed in sunlight, but there were blue shadows down below.

He saw Stroganov on the sunny side of the street and crossed over to him.

From Pavel Alexandrovitch's sad and absent-minded expression, Koshelev understood that he had been upset by something.

Stroganov silently pressed his hand. They went up the steps of a narrow street going uphill. They walked for some time. Both the roofs and the belfries had turned blue. The light of a street lamp looked strangely pale in the distance.

Chinese lanterns were burning in the restaurant gardens, but the sunset still glowed on cockades, gold-embroidered uniforms, and the officers' young faces. The restaurant was full. The hum of conversation and people's movements seemed curiously harmonious, as though everyone were conscious of the mysterious, beautiful stillness of the evening.

The officers stood up when they saw the stout grenadier general with his aide-de-camp. The sword hilts jingled pleasantly. All the young faces that turned to the count seemed handsome and refined, and the glow of the sunset shone in all the eyes.

The count motioned the officers to remain seated. He went upstairs with Koshelev.

An old lime tree rustled by the open window, sending a breath of damp coolness into the room. The evening glow filtering through its branches made ruddy patterns on the table.

The count sipped his wine absent-mindedly. Lost in thought, he leaned his elbows on the table, casting a long shadow across it.

A restful hum of conversation and soft jingling of spurs came from the dark garden below.

"Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever," the count murmured. His face was a dim patch of light in the gathering darkness.

"I suppose it's from the Psalms." He looked at Koshelev with a sad and dreamy smile. "Wasn't that phrase inscribed on the front of the Emperor Paul's castle?"

"Yes, it was," Koshelev said uneasily. "I expect the old soldiers of the regiment still keep a copy of that Psalm about them. If you count the letters in that sentence you will find the number is the same as the years of the Tsar's life. The soldiers believe that Paul had predicted how long he would live."

In the cool darkness of the garden a woman's voice was singing an Italian song to the accompaniment of a harp. They both listened.

"She is singing of Tuscany," Stroganov said. "Yes. . . . So this is the end of Bonaparte's duel with Alexander."

Soft sounds of applause came from the garden. Koshelev looked with anxious pity at the count. He felt sorry for him, and for himself, and for the Russian young men invisible in the darkness, and for the Italian singer with her harp, and for the last ray of sunset that lingered on one of the top windows in the distance.

"We shall take Paris. . . . We come and we go," Stroganov said, after a pause. "All things pass. . . ."

Should I regret that my dear boy hasn't lived to see the victory? Perhaps he is seeing the light of another day and of a different throne. . . . But his wish has not come true: I shall not see Théroigne de Méricourt in Paris. For his sake I will ask you to go to Paris with the army, to find her, if she is still alive, and give her the greetings of Citizen Otchero of the old days. I will give you letters to my old friends and addresses that I can remember. You will be interested to see Paris. . . . It is not giving you too much trouble, is it?"

"Indeed no, count—I shall be delighted."

That night the count's chaise and the covered cart with his son's coffin left the town, and Koshelev remained at Headquarters.

X

Alexander occupied Talleyrand's house in the Rue de Rivoli. Paris was captivated by the graciousness and generosity of the fair-haired Tsar. He paid an informal and respectful visit to the ex-Empress Josephine; he called on the wife of his former tutor, the Swiss republican La Harpe; he went to the Sorbonne, and examined with interest the monuments and official institutions of the capital, gracefully raising and lowering his golden lorgnette. He was always courteous, and a kind smile played about

the corners of his fresh lips, which were soft as a woman's.

Crowds ran after him, and he was greeted with enthusiasm at the theatre and in the streets. The papers and magazines in Paris and other cities of Europe glorified the Emperor Alexander and described everything he said and did.

A kind of soft, gliding radiance seemed to emanate from him, and there was a particular charm about his movements—a feminine grace and noble reserve, an air of restfulness and harmony.

Every morning the ceremony of changing the guard was carried out inside the courtyard, which was divided by a low fence from the street. The Russian Guards moved so lightly that their accoutrements jingled like glass.

The drums beat cheerfully. Every morning there was a crowd of sightseers outside the gates, waiting for a grey horse to be brought up to the steps, and for Alexander to come out of the front door, smiling with the corners of his lips, and smoothing out his perfectly fitting white kid gloves. The crowd gazed ecstatically at the bright vision, as though waiting for a sign from him that would admit them, too, into the realms of light visible to him alone.

Koshelev stood among the crowd looking at the ceremony of changing the guard in the morning. He was not conspicuous in his grey coat and white

waistcoat, but in many streets people had already come to know him. The polite and modest foreigner with his arm in a black sling used to climb up to attics in quest of various addresses. But when they opened the door to him he inquired for lodgers that no one in the house could remember. He might have been a secret agent of the Russian police, or a madman; with polite smile he called up from oblivion the names of men who had perished during the Terror—deputies of the Convention, orators of the Jacobin clubs.

The foreigner in the grey coat had evidently come to Paris to look for ghosts.

In the streets he made way for gloomy Royalists with white cockades in their black hats. He spent a long time examining prints and wax busts in powdered wigs in the windows of the Louvre.

A group of Russian infantry officers came out of a fashion shop, each carrying a pair of white gloves —they were going for a jaunt in the Boulevards. The dazzling white plumes of the shakos quivered in the sun under the fresh young foliage, and all the streets were bright with Russian cockades and Russian smiles.

Koshelev wandered about Paris with Count Stroganov's letter, trying to find Théroigne de Méricourt.

One windy day of rain and sunshine, Koshelev walked down a narrow street on the left bank of the

Seine. He was stopped by some Russian cavalry going past. The men were riding unarmed in a crowd; they must have been watering their horses, or having them shod, or bathing in the river. The horses' hoofs were wet and shining, and their damp coats glossy. They were light bay horses for the most part, and their skin had reflections of ruddy gold in the sunlight. The street resounded with the merry click-clack of the hoofs.

From the soldiers' happy faces and the horses' snorting, one could see that both men and animals were enjoying the fitful sunshine, the noise and the movement. It seemed to Koshelev, as he watched the barefooted riders in their Roman helmets astride the unsaddled bay horses, that Russia herself was passing before him in a gay and beautiful procession.

He gazed into the soldiers' snub-nosed, sunburnt faces under their brass helmets, he smiled in answer to their dazzling smiles, longing to preserve in his memory for ever the cheerful thud of the Russian horses' hoofs, the bright glitter of the Russian brass.

A short hussar in a yellow cloak was standing next to Koshelev. He had taken off his heavy shako to cool his head, and was tidying his long fair hair. His blue eyes sparkled with the same cheerful pride as Koshelev's.

The cavalry had passed. Koshelev turned round to go, and jostled against the hussar.

"Mind where you're going," said the hussar haughtily in French, with a look of annoyance in his blue eyes.

"I beg your pardon," Koshelev answered in Russian.

"You are Russian?" the hussar smiled. "Though, indeed, one can see that."

"Why?"

"I don't know—from your face, from your walk."

They both laughed. Fastening the chain of his shako under his chin, the hussar looked intently at Koshelev.

"I believe I have met you somewhere. Your face seems familiar. . . . Do you come from Moscow?"

"No, from Petersburg—that is, I have lived in Petersburg. Yes, I seem to know you too." He held out his hand to the hussar. "I am Koshelev, captain in the Guards."

"My name is Poltoratsky," said the hussar. "I certainly remember you. We must have met before. . . . Yes, of course, I remember you quite well! It was in Petersburg, about ten years ago. . . . You brought me to the barracks—on that night in March, you know. . . . Do you remember reading the Bible?"

"Good heavens, Poltoratsky!"

They embraced and kissed each other on the lips.

Everyone looked at them with amused interest.

Poltoratsky took Koshelev's arm. They had a great deal to talk about: what regiments they were in, where they lived, why Koshelev was in civilian clothes.

"And we have come to Paris on horseback, four months in the saddle—but none the worse for that."

They soon seemed to have found out all about each other. Poltoratsky began talking about his friend Yengolytchev:

"You don't know our Centaur: I'll introduce you. A splendid fellow, a regular Turk—he is in love with a French girl. He is being made a Freemason to-day in the Lodge of 'Astrea.' You are a Mason too, of course; let's go together."

"Oh, I gave it up years ago."

"Nonsense!—we'll go together. . . . This *is* a meeting! I remember you perfectly well, sitting over your Bible, with a candle fixed to the regimental bed. I used to think you were preparing to be a monk, honour bright! Wait a moment—what's your Christian name?"

"Pyotr Grigoryevitch."

"Oh, yes, of course. . . . You're a queer fellow, Pyotr Grigoryevitch. I remember you very well —though, indeed, in the company of the Muses, of Parny, Schiller, Lafontaine, and Goethe, I have not noticed the flight of time."

Koshelev could not make out whether Poltoratsky was joking or speaking seriously.

Koshelev soon learned of how the hussars had cooked porridge with champagne, and gambled for love; of how the gunners had wanted to send a good salvo into Paris as a revenge for Moscow, but were not allowed to—and a number of other interesting things; he learned about the medal for 1812, which would be worn on a blue ribbon in the buttonhole, and have a triangle with the All-seeing Eye on it, and an inscription: *Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy Name*—"But won't there be anything for us at all?" Poltoratsky added; about the charms of the Parisian houris and the way to find them; about the hussar squadron being attacked somewhere in Saxony by hosts of flies—"Had a Pythagorean been there he would have said the flies were the souls of the French frozen in Russia avenging themselves on the victors"; about dancing a mazurka on the roof of a Polish barn; about a nice little German girl, and another German girl who had had a plateful of cherries.

Poltoratsky chattered away, dragging Koshelev by the arm. Suddenly he pushed him aside.

"Oh, Lischen, let my sighs fly beyond the Rhine, where the Elba flows . . . "

"Come, come, this isn't a theatre," Koshelev laughed.

"No, that's true; but it's Paris. Ah, Koshelev, if only you knew Paris! Good heavens, one could forget everything here. It's the very pinnacle of life—everything here is moving, thinking, speaking. . . . And just think what we have to go back to! Our Mother Russia seems dumb and gloomy in her grandeur by comparison. It's as though everything there were silent, stiff, unsightly. . . . Isn't it a shame that we have serfs and haven't a . . . you know, what everyone is talking about—like in London—what is it called?—Chamber of Deputies or something. . . . Don't laugh. I am ashamed. You see, it's as though something were lacking in Russia."

"I think he is not joking now," Koshelev thought. The hussar let go his arm and turned his sad, mocking face to him.

"But if you want to know the truth, I want nothing in this world—no parliaments, no Paris. . . . It's equally miserable both here and at home. I am wretched, really."

"You don't look it."

"Yes, I am really unhappy. . . . I see how beautiful, how bright life is, and I love it, but there's a kind of chill at my heart."

"Confidences straight away, in the usual Russian fashion," Koshelev thought coldly.

"There was a time when I, too, was in love and

looked forward to pure joys and happiness. . . . But I expect you have heard my story. You may even have met the Zaharyins. Have you heard of Sofyushka Zaharyin?"

"Wait a minute. . . . No, I've heard nothing. Which Zaharyins?"

"From Tula—relations of the Kogushevs. . . . They were overtaken by the French in Moscow. . . . Sofyushka fell ill after the fire. They took her away to the country, and I never saw her again. . . . Oh, my God, why?—what for? . . . " Poltoratsky cried out miserably, as he had done ten years ago, that night in March by the fence of the Summer Garden.

"Never mind." The hussar brushed his cheek with his thin hand. "I don't know why I have told you this. . . . Come along, Koshelev, let's have a drink to celebrate our meeting. There's lovely champagne at Berry's."

Koshelev was trembling all over. The sky, the street, the carriages, the people's faces seemed to him covered with a dark film.

"So that's it," he mutttered. "Forgive me, my dear fellow, I cannot; I must be off. So that's it. . . . I cannot. Good-bye."

"Running errands! Shame! Come on, Koshelev."

"I really cannot."

"Well, damnation take you, go where you like—go to the devil, you hypocrite."

Poltoratsky turned round sharply and went off by himself, holding his sword under his arm. Koshelev looked at his thin back, and only then grasped that the little hussar was not quite sober.

Koshelev fancied that everyone looked at him and knew the secret he had been hiding from himself and from everyone—about the mysterious Sofyushka and the shameful fear which no one but Parasha would ever forgive him.

He almost ran past the houses and over the bridge.

For a moment he thought with bitterness, anger, and regret that his life had been a failure, and that all would have been different had he saved Sofyushka.

She suddenly seemed to him incredibly beautiful; but at once he felt sorry for Parasha, as though he were betraying her for the sake of a vision, of a woman he did not even know.

An amethyst sky rose like a smoky, slanting mountain over Paris: it was going to rain. Koshelev looked at the dome of the Invalides in the distance, muttering to himself: "But I could not have helped her. I couldn't, indeed I couldn't."

Passers-by turned round to look at the muttering foreigner in a grey coat. Drops of rain big as sixpences knocked against his hat. There was a cold

gust of wind, and a flying mist of rain enveloped the people and the carriages.

Fear and anguish possessed Koshelev. The sudden mention of Sofyushka made the awful vision of the fire of Moscow rise before his mind's eye. Paris streets, people flitting to and fro in the rain, the wet glossy carriages—all was lost in the mist: fiery visions surrounded Koshelev.

"What am I thinking of? It is all over, Paris is conquered, I am in Paris. . . . But then, that fire has not burnt out yet. Stroganov rightly said it was merely a symbol of a fire more terrible. And indeed, we are on fire," he muttered bitterly. "We are all restless—Poltoratsky, and the count, and I. . . . And Yevstigney was burned, and my Pavlusha too. Oh, God, Russia is on fire, and it is fearful to see it. . . ."

He recalled being taken along with the prisoners, and thought that Potoratsky somehow reminded him of the trumpeter who had walked beside him. He recalled Parasha's black velvet cap. His wife, the coachmaker, the trumpeter, the hussar, his grenadiers, the count, the young horsemen he had just met—all the Russian people he had ever seen suddenly seemed to him extraordinarily beautiful.

"Can it be, O God, that you will give Russia over to the fire? No, you will make her the abode of light, or else why all those trials? No, I believe Rus-

sia is your country. Are not Yevstigney, and the trumpeter, and my wife, your children—and have you not promised that they—the meek and strong ones—shall inherit the earth? Lord, Thy will be done. . . ."

The noise of the rain seemed to soothe him.

At the corner of the road he met a Russian grenadier in white trousers and a heavy shako that looked like a wet mitre. The grenadier was walking hand in hand with a young girl in a silk scarf tied in a bow on her breast. A fresh and charming face peeped out happily from under a wet bonnet. She was holding up her skirts so that one could see her white stockings. The huge grenadier and she were holding hands just as peasant boys and girls do in Russia.

It was Corporal Mihailo Perekrestov escorting "little Suzanne," as her neighbors called her, to her laundry from the merry-go-rounds. He let go her hand and saluted. Koshelev smiled kindly as he walked past.

"He looks like our captain, but he is in civilian clothes. I must have made a mistake," Mihailo said confidently. He always spoke to her clearly and confidently as though she could understand.

They stood in a puddle by the worn steps to the laundry. Suzanne looked round to see that no one was about, and, standing on tiptoe, gave a sharp

tug at the black side-whiskers of this strange big child with the funny name of Misha. Suzanne liked pulling his whiskers by way of good-bye.

Koshelev looked round twice at the grenadier and the French girl. He was the only one to see this unceremonious way of treating the Russian Guards.

XI

Many doors had been shut in Koshelev's face, in many houses people had politely shaken their heads, looking with perplexity at Count Stroganov's envelopes with unknown names written on them.

The chariot of the Revolution and of the Empire had passed over Paris, and few of the count's friends could have survived the storm; but Koshelev knocked at one more door, on the fourth floor of an old house in a dark street on the bank of the Seine.

He waited for some time, and knocked again. Then old Benger, once secretary of the Friends of the Law Club, opened the door. Benger had weathered all the storms in his nest. His bald head was shaking and his eyes watered. The old Jacobin came out on the stairs in a shabby quilted dressing-gown and slippers on his bare feet.

"Monsieur Benger?"

"Yes—what do you want?"

The old man scanned his foreign visitor distrustfully.

"I have a letter for you from Citizen Otchero."

"Citizen Otchero? There are no citizens now, and I don't know of any Otchero."

"The letter is addressed to you, Monsieur Benger."

The old man wrapped his dressing-gown round his thin legs. He took the letter from Koshelev with some hesitation and went up to the round window on the landing.

"Citizen Aristide Benger from Citizen Otchero," he read.

"Yes, this is my name—Aristide. But I don't expect any letters; everyone has forgotten me . . . like a mangy dog. I say, is it a joke? I don't know any Otchero . . . Otchero."

Suddenly his eyes sparkled, and the envelope shook in his bony hands.

"What, you come from Otchero? From the Russian Otchero? Do I know him, indeed! . . . You are Russian? Come in. . . . Otchero—such names no longer exist. . . . Come in."

The old man almost dragged Koshelev into his room. They sat down in the rickety arm-chairs by the fireplace. A dim light fell upon the Jacobin's watering eyes, his wrinkled cheek, and the wisps of grey hair on his temples. Koshelev's face was in-

visible in the dark. Bending over the fire the old man broke the green seal of the envelope and read the letter, his lips moving silently.

"My dear friend, my dear friend," he whispered, kissing the letter.

He huddled himself in the arm-chair, holding the leaf of paper in his trembling hand.

"Ah, so you remember her, Otchero. . . . You remember our Théroigne. She's finished."

"Is she dead?"

"No. Tell Otchero she is alive. . . . In June —no, in May of the accursed year ninety-three . . . twenty years ago—she was stripped and flogged in the Place des Tuileries, near the guillotine. She went out of her mind—with the shame of it, perhaps. . . . This is what great revolutions lead to. She has been in a madhouse for the last twenty years. She is here, in Paris. Give me a piece of paper; I'll write down the name of the place. . . . So Otchero hasn't forgotten her. Poor Otchero! Tell him to pray for her poor soul."

"Amen," said Koshelev, getting up.

While he was hurrying back to his hotel in the rain, Yengolytchev was taking Ginette, daughter of Colonel Dorfey, home from a walk in the Palais-Royal Gardens.

When they came up to the house, a tall old man in the uniform of Napoleon's army stepped up to

them. He raised his arm as though to strike Ginette, and the girl rushed indoors. The old man's face was wet with the rain, his grey hair stuck to his cheeks. Yengolytchev understood that he was Ginette's father, and stepped back despondently, leaning on his curved sword.

Colonel Dorfey had hurried to Paris from Fontainebleau, walking part of the way and picking up an occasional *diligence*. He had left his battalion, the Colours, the Emperor. He had had a letter saying that Ginette—his Ginette—had been seen with a Russian barbarian. Ah, that Russian and Austrian rabble, those Russian savages who had flooded luckless Paris! And to think it was a mere boy of a hussar—a wet puppy, with the white fur on his yellow cloak bedraggled with the rain!

"Off with you!"

With a guilty smile the boy wiped his face with his yellow sleeve, and began explaining something in a candid voice. That swarthy barbarian with a grey scar on his face evidently did not understand. Very well, it should be put plainly to him. The old man stepped up to the hussar, took hold of his ear between finger and thumb and pulled it to and fro. The hussar's face turned livid.

"Off with you!"

The old man led the Russian hussar by the ear along the street. He wrenched himself free and

walked off without looking back. His yellow cloak soon disappeared in the mist of rain.

The hussars were playing cards by candle-light when Centaur came in. He lay down on the sofa with his face to the wall. Angrily beating the leather cushion with his fists, he muttered, almost groaned, through his teeth:

"He is her father, so what could I do? Her father, damnation take him! . . . "

"Who are you talking about, Pasha?" Poltoratsky called to him.

"Go to hell!" Centaur shouted furiously, sitting up on the sofa. "Curse you all! Gabbling and shouting like Jews at market, damnation take you!"

Taking the leather cushion under his arm, Centaur, angry and dishevelled, went to spend the night with the horses in the courtyard.

In the night the great city with its flickering lights seemed to breathe and murmur like the sea. The red lights of carriages glowed in the dark water, soft music came from somewhere near the bridges, and beyond the Seine rockets flew up noiselessly, making green arches in the sky.

XII

At nightfall Corporal Perekrestov returned to the familiar street where three stone steps led to the basement laundry.

He walked up and down along the wall patiently like a sentry. All the lights were out and the shutters closed. Suddenly the glass door opened and Suzanne came out, tying her shawl across her breast. She recognised the grenadier and laughed in the dark.

They had not said a word about meeting and could not have done so: they did not understand each other. The corporal had been walking among the crowd till dark, admiring the fireworks, the music, and the flitting of the merry-go-rounds, and had then returned to the familiar street almost without knowing why.

It was the same with little Suzanne. She heard the far-off music that made her think of some huge festival going on in Paris. She came out to look at the rockets.

That was how they met and came to the bank of the Seine, where it was overgrown with damp, prickly grass smelling of wild thyme.

A low mist had risen over the river. A new moon, like a golden boat, barely showed through it, bathing its fine chainlike reflection in the dark water.

Mihailo touched Suzanne's hand:

"Look, the new moon is having a bath."

He spoke as though she could understand him—and Suzanne did understand in her own way.

They were sitting in the wet grass side by side,

like children, looking at the sky. Mihailo put his shako down in the grass, and it was soon covered with a film of vapour. Suzanne's hand rested on the grenadier's shoulder. This foreigner with kind brown eyes, arms like iron, and incomprehensible speech that was like the cooing of pigeons—this warrior of a strange nation, the gentle and obedient giant Misha, attracted little Suzanne.

When the girl's fingers lightly touched the grenadier's whiskers, he threw his arm round her shoulders. She cried out; and because she cried out and pressed herself closer to him, Mihailo threw her down into the grass and parted her arms.

Suzanne wrenched herself free, scratching his face. Without her bonnet, her shawl all crumpled, she huddled herself together and burst into sobs. Wiping her face with the hem of her skirt, she cried pitifully, "Jesus, Mary!" crossing herself, as the Roman Catholics do, with the whole hand. Mihailo listened to her guiltily.

The stars were very low now and seemed to catch at the tall blades of grass. Suzanne's head was in a halo of golden mist. Afraid to touch her, Mihailo said shyly:

"I say, don't distress yourself. . . . I won't do it again. Look at the moon—horns of gold. . . . There, you darling. . . ."

He ventured to touch the hem of her dress that

she held in her hand, and began wiping her face with it.

"There, you darling. . . . Look, I too make the sign of the cross. . . . We are no infidels. . . . Lord Jesus Christ. . . . You good girl. . . ."

"Good girl," she mimicked him angrily, biting the end of her bonnet, and surprised even herself by smiling through her tears. Mihailo laughed aloud, and they both rose to their feet. The grenadier had not had time to fasten his shako, Suzanne ran so fast along the river bank. He caught her up in a street where a lantern hung over a high stone wall. Happy and breathless, she pushed him away, but suddenly clung to him and, standing on tiptoe, kissed him, warmly and awkwardly, right on the lips. Then she instantly dashed away.

The black-haired grenadier, with his shako under his arm, stood under the lantern, saying aloud to himself:

"That's a fine girl, now . . . a splendid girl!"

XIII

Corporal Govoruhin often regretted that none of the old men were with the battalion—neither Afrikan, nor Rodion, nor the Finnish drummer. They would have persuaded Mihailo not to ruin the foreign

girl by taking her to Russia, to share a soldier's hard life.

Mihailo came back from his evening walks gay and, as it were, half drunk. When Akim reproached him, he merely shook his head and said proudly and obstinately:

"I wouldn't listen to anyone in the world, uncle, if they told me to leave that girl. I've made up my mind."

"You're a fool, that's what you are," Akim said. "Fancy taking a strange girl to Russia—it will be the death of her. Petersburg barracks are not like this soft living. You'll see."

"It's not going to be the death of her, and it's no use your frightening me with Russia—I am Russian myself, I should hope."

"You're a milksop, not a Russian."

Akim had reported to his superiors that the corporal had got out of hand, but the officers were mere greenhorns and spoiled the soldiers—they only laughed. They thought it would be amusing to marry a Russian grenadier to a French girl. "You will have some fun at the wedding too, old man." Fun indeed! The gentry thought of nothing but fun.

Akim consulted the old men in other battalions. There was a truly ancient soldier in the regiment, Kir the standard-bearer. He could remember the

accession of the Empress Elizabeth, and Count Tchernyshov taking Berlin, and Suvorov storming Ismail. Kir must have been about ninety, and there were no soldiers like him left: he was seven feet tall, his bones strong as iron, his hair like snow, and his teeth all white and perfect. Only his sight had suffered with the years, and he had to keep wiping with a clean rag the bright tears that gathered in them. Kir had been brought to Paris in a grenadier's cart merely for show; he only joined the ranks on special occasions, standing in his place by the Colours when the drums beat the tattoo and the soldiers took off their shakos for prayer.

When Akim Govoruhin came, old Kir was sitting dozing in the courtyard in an easy-chair given him by the officers. The standard-bearer spent his days in peace and comfort.

Kir's hands were brown and dry like the hands of a mummy. His wrinkled skin looked shiny in the sun. He woke up, listened to the corporal, and said indistinctly:

"Don't hinder him, my dear, don't worry. . . . Let him marry the girl he likes. A new, peaceful time is at hand—joy and happiness for our country. . . . I have good hopes for the future, with God's blessing."

Akim bowed down to his waist before the standard-bearer, and went away in silence.

On Sunday after Mass, when the grenadiers in their dress uniform were going out for the day, Akim overtook Mihailo at the gate, and tapped him on the shoulder.

"What is it, uncle?" asked the young corporal, turning his head to him with a graceful movement.

Akim shifted from one foot to the other, brushed a fleck of dust off his uniform, and said, looking away:

"Why, it has never been the way among soldiers to hide your betrothed from your regimental uncles."

Mihailo blushed crimson, smiled, and his brown eyes filled with light.

"Why, Uncle Akim, I am only too pleased. . . . It's only because you seemed angry with me that I didn't venture to ask you."

"Didn't venture, indeed. . . . What's the girl's name, and her father's name?"

"Their names are different from ours. She is called Suzanne, but she didn't tell me her father's name."

"Suzanne—what a name! Does she believe in God, I wonder?"

"Sure enough she believes, uncle. . . . She is a fine girl in every way."

"Very well. Take me to see her."

On Sunday, at the fair by the New Bridge, one

could see two smart-looking guardsmen in white gaiters—an elderly one with reddish hair, and a young one, dark and swarthy. The two giants stood before a small French girl in a light bonnet and a humble shawl tied in a bow in front. Sunlight fell on the girl's lively face through the lace of the bonnet. The elderly grenadier, towering above her, awkwardly gave her his hand. The French girl shook it cautiously and gave him a charming smile.

"What a hand!" the old soldier said severely. "Nothing to take hold of. . . ."

The young grenadier and the girl walked on in front, and the old man followed a step behind, like a strict tutor taking out his pupils for a walk.

On other days also the two Russian giants were seen about the streets, but now they had two ladies with them: the young grenadier and the girl in the bonnet walked arm-in-arm in front, followed by the elderly grenadier and a stout lady with a limp; she wore a bonnet with crimson ribbons, and took snuff. She was Suzanne's employer, the worthy widow Roillet.

When Corporal Mihailo was being married in the regimental church, the lame lady was among the military crowd, as well as a slightly drunk, quiet little man in a green-striped waistcoat with brass buttons—Monsieur Paul, a shoemaker in the same street where Madame Roillet's laundry was.

The officers filled a silver tumbler with gold coins for the bridal pair. The regimental musicians were tuning their instruments in the hall behind the church, where the walls were decorated with monograms made of green branches, and the tables were covered with white cloths. The light silvery notes of the French horn and occasional trills of the flute could be heard at the same time as the church singing.

Corporal Akim carried the bridal crowns into the altar recess. Mihailo and the little Suzanne draped in her bridal veil stood in the slanting sunlight by the lectern. The first to congratulate the newly married couple was the Commander of the Grenadier Battalion. He lifted Suzanne's chin to have a look at her. She turned pale and hid her face on Mihailo's breast, suddenly terrified.

But at that moment the white doors into the hall flew open to the strains of the wedding march.

Soon Mihailo's young bride settled in the narrow little room behind the partition, and Corporal Akim put his bed in the barrack-room. Instead of Akim's iron-bound box, Suzanne's light basket stood on the shelf.

She had brought along in that basket two carefully ironed and mended chemises, a lace-trimmed apron, a bundle of silk stockings worn at the heel, dried flowers, a broken mirror in a white frame with

pictures of birds and Chinamen, a crucifix, and a grey kitten.

Mihailo taught her to light the lamp before the ikon of St. Nicolas. She brought flowers from the market for the foreign saint—stocks and petunias. To adorn the stern Nicolas, she had to stand on a stool. Mihailo helped her, and afterwards carried her about the narrow room in his arms.

The sanctuary lamp shed its blue light in the small hours of the morning when little Suzanne gave her Misha, as best she could, lessons in love which she herself was learning for the first time.

XIV

The weather was fine in Paris during Easter week. It was warm as summer, and the streets of the great city seemed spacious and light.

In 1814 the Russian and Roman Catholic Easters coincided. In the bright stillness of the holy days many dreamed that the last war had been fought and the thunder of battle stilled for ever.

On Easter Sunday Alexander's troops in full dress marched towards the Place de la Révolution at an easy measured step to the pleasant jingle of their accoutrements.

In the evil place of bloodthirsty executions, a serv-

ice was to be held that day, at the wish of the Russian Emperor, in the presence of the allied armies of all Europe, for the peace of the world, the forgiveness of wrongs, the welfare of nations, unity, joy, and concord.

On the very spot where King Louis XVI had been executed, the Russian carpenters built a high platform. They had been gaily hammering at it since dawn.

Their coats flashing yellow in the sun and their swords tinkling softly, the Izyum Hussars rode to the parade in bright array. The bay horses, their coats glossy with grooming, took small graceful steps as though showing off their harness.

All were gay, riding in the sunshine and the cool breeze. Yengolytchev alone looked gloomy. He had been gloomy ever since the day when the old Frenchman had pulled his ear. He was raising his angular knees higher than he should, and his eyes were narrowed with fury—he was angry with the whole world.

The cavalry was stationed in the avenue of the Champs Elysées. The infantry was slowly forming up along the bank of the Seine. The officers stood in front of the ranks. Taking off their three-cornered hats and wiping their foreheads with their handkerchiefs, they said, smiling, what a lovely day it was. Warm sunlight streamed on to their faces through

the foliage. White plumes of the soldiers' leather shakos waved in the wind.

The Russian Guards formed a square backing on to the Elysées Bourbon Palace. The blue line of the troops moved like a wave and stood still.

A battalion of the Paris National Guards marched quickly across the Place de la Révolution and surrounded the platform. Their muskets glittered in the sun.

Brigadier-General Smerling, a notorious muddler and martinet, thought this a suitable opportunity to inspect the lines.

The fussy general galloped just in front of the horses' heads, his fat purple neck looking as though it would burst the tight collar of his uniform. He came to the left flank and began breaking up the splendidly still and even line of the Izyum Hussars:

"Number three—come forward; number six—back a bit; number seven—to your right." Smerling's heavy horse made Yengolytchev's Phœbus draw back. Yengolytchev frowned and muttered:

"Fussy old fool . . . "

Smerling heard him and jumped in the saddle, his purple neck swelling out.

"Who said that? He's no hussar, the dirty skunk."

"I am no hussar?" Centaur spurred his horse and flew at the general, flashing his sword.

Smerling nimbly turned his heavy horse and galloped away, bending down to the saddle. Yengolytchev dashed after him. Loudly smacking the general with the flat of his sword on the fleshy back, he chased him at full speed all along the hussar front.

For a moment the hussars were struck dumb with amazement, but suddenly the whole brigade burst out into desperate uncontrollable laughter. At last Poltoratsky and Mertvago managed to catch Yengolytchev's horse.

"You mad fool, what have you done?" Poltoratsky shouted. The red-haired Mertvago was shaking with laughter.

The officers took Centaur away from the parade. He made hoarse noises in his throat and rolled his eyes wildly. Jumping off his horse he bent down mechanically to brush bits of horse-hair off his leather-lined breeches.

At that moment a vague murmur came from the distance; the officers dashed back to their places and sat motionless in the saddle. The Izyum Hussars all turned their heads to the right, forgetting everything in the world. A tremor passed over their faces, and low words of command rang out:

"Stand to attention!"

The Tsar rode slowly past the troops on his tall, light grey horse. There seemed to be a halo round his

head; he held his hat in his hand that hung down so that the foam-white feathers rustled close to his stirrup. His glove glistened like snow in the sunshine.

At the platform the grooms took the grey horse, and threw over it a green cloth with an embroidered monogram "A."

The wind played with the hanging sleeves of the choir-boys' green, silver-braided coats. The Tsar ascended the platform with the whole assembly of the Russian clergy. Silver vestments with a pattern of green roses and crosses swept slowly along like a cloud. The deacons' blue stoles blew about in the wind.

The first words of the service, serene and gracious, re-echoed in the square.

Louis XVIII and his Court were watching the Russian service from a pavilion on the terrace of the Tuileries.

His Majesty the most Christian King of France sat in an arm-chair, resting his leg, wrapped in cotton-wool, on a folding canvas stool. He was suffering from gout that day.

Bright with the lighted candles and the shimmering silvery-green vestments, the platform, smoking like the Burning Bush, seemed to float in transparent waves of incense.

Louis closed his eyes, and, making the sign of the

cross, with his plump hand wiped drops of perspiration off his forehead.

Every stone in the city, the walls, the young tender leaves, and the white mountain of clouds above the Seine seemed to listen spellbound to the clear, childish voices and the jingling of the censers.

There was a great, silent flash of lightning in the Champs Elysées—it was the cavalry lowering their swords. The troops knelt down quietly.

"We praise Thee, O Lord," sang the small choristers. Russian priests sprinkled with holy water the kneeling armies of Europe. Sparkling drops flew far into the distance.

A sudden boom of guns shook the square. The smoke of the Russian salute rose over the city.

Smiling and screwing up his eyes the Tsar walked down the red-cloth-covered steps, buttoning his white glove. The lines of troops broke up in the smoke from the guns, words of command resounded, and regimental bands struck up a melodious and solemn march to the thunder of the Russian salutes.

XV

On the day of the service Pavel Yengolytchev, officer of the Izyum Hussar Regiment, hero of fifteen attacks on the battlefields of Russia and Western Europe, was degraded to the ranks.

An infantry soldier was on sentry duty in the courtyard by the grated window of the regimental guardroom. His shako came down almost to his nose. He was singing something in a sleepy voice, as Russian peasants do on a long journey or at monotonous work.

A girl in a straw hat and a white dress, and a small hussar in a yellow coat, were holding on to the bars of the window and talking to the prisoner.

The sentry did not want to let the French lady into the yard, and waving his hand at her, shouted from time to time:

"*Allez, madame, allez.*"

But at the gate the yellow hussar gallantly offered her his arm and called the sentry a fool. The hussar and the girl were feeding Centaur with pears, ham, and cherry tarts. Pressing his face to the bars he was munching everything at once, grinning joyfully.

"Mishka, look. . . . My Psyche, my dawn. . . . More precious than life itself. I thought we were parted for ever—but she hurried after the carriage all through Paris when they brought me here. . . . The father drove me away with shame, but the daughter is here—my joy, my bright swallow. . . . Mishka, you must get me out of this scrape, you devil. . . ."

Poltoratsky gallantly jingled his spurs, helping

Ginette to peep at the window: she stood on tiptoe while he held her up by her cool little elbows. When he took leave of her, he smiled and said, bowing to the weeping girl:

"Don't despair, mademoiselle, I beg you—I assure you, there's no occasion."

Poltoratsky spent that day racing over Paris. His horse was all in a lather. He suddenly decided to pay belated calls to all his relations and connections, his superior officers, and commanders of several regiments. He also went that day to Talleyrand's house, where the Emperor's headquarters were.

The following morning Yengolytchev was summoned before the Tsar.

Alexander was pleased with the letters he had had from Petersburg, with the parade, the Easter week, and with his giving a ball to the English that evening. He was gay, simple, and charming with everyone. The cold cloud of darkness that always weighed upon his heart seemed to have melted away in the light of the Easter days. He recalled with pleasant sadness, as one recalls a far-off dream, his strange parting from poor Stroganov. During those Easter days in Paris, the Tsar felt as though a happy radiance came from everyone he met, and the world was resting in perfect peace and joy.

Dressed in a blue coat and a white satin waistcoat, Alexander, crossing his well-shaped legs in white

stockings, sat in an arm-chair by a screen, polishing his nails. A black-haired young general, lounging in an easy-chair behind the screen, was telling him some amusing story in English. The Tsar laughed pleasantly.

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in, please," Alexander said in his mellow voice.

Yengolytchev came in. The laughter died out of Alexander's eyes. Moving his hand across his forehead, he frowned slightly, and got up from his chair. Yengolytchev was looking at him with shining eyes, wild with delight.

"Ah, what is this you have done, Yengolytchev?"

The hussar was breathing audibly.

"How could you have done such a thing?"

The Tsar stepped back and shook his finger before Centaur's nose.

"You are an insolent, an impossible man."

Yengolytchev was ecstatically watching the warning finger that seemed to him a pillar of light.

"A brave hussar of Borodino, Kulm, and Leipzig. . . . I had the honour of knowing your late father. . . . No, you are no hussar, you're a wild Tatar, a Calmuck. I don't wish to know you; you have gone off your head, haven't you? Answer!"

"Yes, Sire."

"Then I'll have you locked up in a madhouse. You're a lunatic, you shall be put in fetters."

The Tsar's high brow flushed and his thin lips twitched. He had worked himself up.

"I'll have you court-martialed. . . . They'll break your sword over your head in the market-place. . . . You will be shot! How dare you beat my general? It's true he had no business to interfere with the formation of the troops. . . . But in front of the whole brigade. . . . Answer me, how did you dare to beat him?"

"With the flat of my sword, Sire."

"What sort of an answer's that? How did you dare to beat him, I say?"

"On his back, Sire."

The Tsar fanned his face with his handkerchief.

"You don't understand me. Very well, you beat him with the flat of your sword, on his back. . . . And he?"

"He didn't do anything. . . . He quacked."

"What d'you mean—quacked?"

"Like a duck, Sire."

"Like a duck?"

The Tsar threw up his hands and stepped back to the screen.

"Yengolytchev, tell me yourself, what am I to do with you?"

There was a silence. Beads of perspiration came out on Centaur's pale, swarthy face.

"I don't know, Sire," he said, drawing a deep breath. Suddenly he started and cried joyfully, his eyes aglow:

"Yes, I know, Sire, I know. . . . I ought to be shot."

Alexander pressed his handkerchief to his lips.

"Get out, you. . . . About turn, quick march!"

Centaur saluted, and sharply turning on his heel walked to the door.

Alexander's blue eyes, sparkling with amusement, met the young general's laughing eyes over the screen.

"Can you imagine," the Tsar said, laughing a deep mellow laugh, "how the brigade must have laughed at Smerling's disgrace! Those mad hussars with their insolent swords. . . . I noticed long ago that in the Izyum Regiment the swords are too long. I'll give orders to have them shortened."

No such orders were issued, however, but on the following morning, after prayers, a gracious ukase was read to all the regiments, about adding to the Russian orange-and-black cockade a third colour—white, in honour of the glory and victories of the Parisian campaign.

The same morning an order was read in the Izyum Regiment that Subaltern Officer Pavel Yengoly-

tchev, who had been degraded, was reinstated in his former rank.

XVI

The hussars were on the march—a long journey before them.

Paris was disappearing behind them, fading away in bluish clouds of smoke. A fresh wind whistled round the men's heads. The commander gave orders for prayers.

The hussars gloomily sang "Our Father" in unison, brushing the cold drops of rain off their lashes. Wind blew into their open mouths. Rain pattered on the leather tops of the shakos.

A silver bugle was playing far ahead. The regiment moved farther and farther away from the Porte St. Martin.

The hussars were on the march—a long journey before them.

Beyond the misty line of swaying shakos the high-pitched voice of the choir-leader curled off into a long, drawn-out trill:

"That steed swifter than the desert wind."

The hussars straightened their moustaches, waiting for the moment to join in. Poltoratsky drew level with a soldier on the right flank.

"There's a horse there without a rider. . . . It looks like Zhigar's horse. . . . Where is he?"

"Don't know, sir," Gratch answered hurriedly, listening to the choir leader. "He didn't turn up at roll-call. . . . I think it must be that woman in Paris."

Staring in front of him, Gratch took a deep breath and roared, together with the rest of the squadron, whistling as he sang:

> "Young Zara, as shy as a timid gazelle,
> Bloomed like a palm in the flowering dale."

Poltoratsky lagged behind; that devil Centaur was not there either.

Centaur was riding full speed to catch up his regiment. He was not alone; Ginette was in the saddle with him. Her straw hat had slipped off and was knocking him sharply on the face. His arm had gone to sleep. He was grinning joyfully.

When he caught up the transport, he jumped off his horse, carried Ginette to a covered carriage, shut the doors, and jumped back into the saddle.

With shining eyes he noisily galloped up to Poltoratsky, splashing him with cold mud.

"You devil, where have you been all this time?" Poltoratsky wiped his cheek with his cloak. "You reckless idiot!"

"I've wasted no time, you may be sure! I picked

her up into my saddle at full gallop. She was on the steps, and I picked her up like a whirlwind." Hoarse and perspiring, Centaur drew a joyful breath. "Would you believe it, she struggled hard."

"Impossible! We had arranged it all last night; she had promised she would wait for you at daybreak."

"She did wait, but she struggled all the same. She scratched. Why, if anyone picked you up at a gallop, you'd scratch too."

Centaur neighed hoarsely and spurred his horse, splashing Poltoratsky again.

"A regular devil!"

With a dazzling smile, Poltoratsky wiped the mud off his face.

The hussars were on the march—a long journey before them.

A month or two later they were wading under cold rain through the heavy mud of Lithuania like a dismal procession of mounted monks. Their cloaks were steaming with the damp and with the heat of the horses.

The hussars overtook the grenadiers on the way. Some of the men had their shakos tied with a rag or a piece of string, and all had the skirts of their coats tucked under their cartridge belts as they pulled out of the squelching mud their enormous boots sticky with clay.

The hussars turned their horses into the flooded field, and water splashed under the hoofs.

The grenadiers, glad of a moment's rest, looked at them from the road, leaning on their muskets. They swore at the hussars good-humoredly: "It's nothing to them, the six-legged brutes! They look like cassocked priests going their way to the devil's wedding."

Count Stroganov unbuttoned the mud-splashed leather apron of his carriage. The battalions that were the first to return from Paris had overtaken him in Lithuania.

Poltoratsky looked from the road at the grenadier general, whom he did not know, and bowed politely. Stroganov nodded kindly. Poltoratsky spurred his horse and followed his squadron at a gallop.

The little fair-haired hussar had grown thinner and paler on the way home. Bending down to the window of the blue carriage that followed the regimental transport, he recited Parny as before, but his blue eyes lost their lustre when, rising in the stirrups, he glanced at the grey sky and the dark plain.

"That's our country," he said sadly. "How many triumphal arches we have been through! It's written on one side of them 'To the brave warriors' and on the other 'Reward in their fatherland.' . . . But what can be Russia's reward? God grant us prosperity, peace, and freedom! How empty and

dark it is all round! How sadly our native land meets the victors!"

Centaur constantly jumped down from his horse and walked beside the carriage, from which a pleasing feminine voice often called to him. He greedily caught with both hands the slender hand that was occasionally held out to him from the carriage window.

In the grenadier transport Corporal Akim and Mihailo walked on either side of a cart with a hempen awning.

When the hussars crossed the road, the grenadier transport halted. A young woman looked out of the carriage window; another woman, in a wet bonnet, peeped at her from under the grenadiers' cart awning. The eyes of the travellers met, and the regimental transports parted.

Count Stroganov fastened back the carriage apron.

"We are off now," he said to Koshelev, who was sitting in the corner of the carriage. Overtaking the count on the way from Paris, Koshelev had told him carefully about his meeting with Théroigne de Méricourt. The doctors would not admit him to her, but he had seen her from the inner gallery in the hospital courtyard. He saw a naked old woman crawl out on all fours into the yard. She raised her wrinkled face, and her vacant, senseless

stare swept round the gallery where he was standing. The awful old woman, Théroigne de Méricourt, lowered her head and began scraping together bits of straw and dirt with her bony hands.

The count listened to Koshelev calmly, and said, touching his knee with his cool hand:

"Let us forget, let us forget if we can. . . . It's fate."

The wheels splashed through the pools of water. The carriage shook and swayed from side to side in the mud. Koshelev's greenish eyes were bright in the half-darkness. He repeated the count's words:

"Fate. . . . Yes, indeed. I don't know how to say it, but when I recall all that has happened to me and to all of us, I think I was like a drop in the ocean. Waves of the human ocean have tossed us this way and that, and we seem to have dissolved in this marvellous motion that moulded our destinies. . . . We could not be stronger than fate. It has shown us the devastation of Moscow—that dreadful fire, the symbol of our destruction as you called it—and it has shown us the symbol of our highest victory —beautiful Paris. Moscow's fire has burnt out, and Paris is conquered, and we are going home. The ploughman is already tracing his peaceful furrow in the field of Borodino. But no one understands what it has all been for, and why we nearly perished and then were so exalted. It

isn't for us to understand the mysterious, unfathomable ways of destiny. . . . And it is better not to look fate in the face. It may be true that I did once see its face in the burning Moscow; but it merely frightened me. One thing I believe in: since fate has brought us to an unheard-of victory, it will lead us further. God is with us—I have faith in that."

"Perhaps, perhaps." The count smiled slightly.

"God is with us," Koshelev repeated warmly. "After our victory over Napoleon we are on the very pinnacle of the world, and I am convinced that everything in our country must change. There will be no more serfdom; Russia will be free and great, the finest country in the world. I believe that God and His powers are with us. . . . And yet, I do not know why, I am afraid—afraid to think about Russia. More afraid after the victory than in the fire. . . . And I am bringing home a kind of bitterness—it's as though I had left something undone. And it is not I alone. All are coming home with that restless, unhappy feeling of a duty unfulfilled. Perhaps that feeling is the very voice of fate that calls us and points something out to us, but we don't know where it calls us or to what it points. . . ."

"Perhaps!" Stroganov repeated.

The carriage window, dim with vapour, had

turned yellow. The rain had stopped. A cool mist was rising from the ground. Mountains of yellowish clouds towered in the sky, looking like a Roman legion that had dropped asleep on the march. Their brass shields and plumed helmets were already growing dim.

The damp glow of sunset rested on the leather shakos and bayonet points that were like lighted candles. In the grenadier transport a young woman in a bonnet looked dreamily at the sunset from under the cart's hempen awning, and so did the transport officer, the sick soldiers in the carts, and a group of Jewish children who had joined the grenadier brigade on their way from one village to another.

The troops and transport columns moved on towards the Roman legion stretched out across the yellow sky.

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It was almost dusk, although the tower clock was only chiming a quarter-past two on the dull day of December 14th, 1825. Cold clouds of smoke were moving over Petersburg.

The Petersburg side and the Vassilyevsky Ostrov were quiet and empty as usual at this hour on a winter day. But a continuous roar came from be-

yond the dark, snow-swept Neva. It was like the sound of crows cawing loudly in a bare copse at sunset.

The clock at the Petropavlovsky fortress had struck a quarter to three when a company of marines doubled across the Galerny Square. A young officer in a quilted coat ran on one side of them as though driven by the wind. It was Nicolay Bestuzhev leading his men to the Senate Square.

Buttoning up their coats, blowing their noses, and breathing hoarsely, the marines fell in on the right flank of the cavalry, which was already massed in the Square.

Companies of the Moscow Foot Guards were drawn up in close order by Peter's monument, with their backs to the Senate, resting their muskets on the ground. Their leather straps were pushed on one side, their coats unbuttoned, steam rose from their shoulders, and the snow had turned dark under their feet.

A continuous roar came from hundreds of throats:

"Hurrah for Constantine! . . . Long live Constantine!"

The neighboring streets were black with people gazing towards the Senate Square, crossing themselves in fear and anguish. What troops were those seething round the bronze horseman? Why was

that young officer there running without his shako? Why had he not stopped to pick up the white strap he had dropped? They could see the battalions forming up in black squares. Officers were dashing about between them.

By the Winter Palace a tall officer—the Emperor Nicolas—was hastily manœuvring companies of the Guards who had remained loyal to him. They set out towards the mutineers. Tchihatchov, the Chief of the Petersburg Police, galloped in front with the dragoons. The dragoons rode on the pavement. The people rushed away towards the Gorohovy Street and St. Isaac's Cathedral. The Senate Square was shaken by loud outbursts of "hurrah."

Nicolas violently spurred his horse and galloped along the front as though not knowing where to go. His Guards halted at the corner. Rising in the stirrups, he saw the black columns of the rebels, the vapour of their breath, and the frosty smoke over the shakos, the dull stubble of the bayonets the grey snow of the Square between the troops and the crowd.

The grenadiers were now doubling past the Palace, where he had just been forming up his troops. They jostled against each other, running with their coats flung over their shoulders and their muskets at the trail. A young lieutenant in a soldier's cap led

them. The cap kept slipping over his eyes; he was waving his sword and shouting something. It was Lieutenant Panov, leading the grenadiers to join the rebels in the Senate Square.

He stopped by the Palace gates—had he lost his way? Where was the Senate Square, the Bronze Horseman, the League of Welfare?

"Make way, let me pass," he shouted, beating with his sword at the Palace gate. The frozen steel clanged. The bolt rattled. Soldiers in heavy shakos were standing under the dark arches: the Pioneer battalion of the Life Guards were on duty at the Palace.

"Not our men!" Panov cried and turned back. Had he not turned back, had he overpowered the Pioneers, and occupied the Winter Palace with his grenadiers, the 14th of December would have had a different ending.

The thin lieutenant ran, jumping over the snowdrifts, followed by the crowd of soldiers. The Emperor Nicolas galloped up to the men.

"Halt!" he called loudly.

A middle-aged grenadier, Mihailo Perekrestov, with dark hair greying at the temples, sharply flung back his cartridge-box and said:

"We are for Constantine—let us pass."

"If so, here's your way; go on!" Nicolas backed

his horse. The grenadiers pushed him back to the lamp-post. Over the heads of the running men he gave orders to his troops to go to the Admiralty.

Major-General Islenev had already brought three companies of the fusiliers to the Admiralty. The Emperor's Guards moved slowly towards the Gorohovy Street.

General Miloradovitch was riding in front, close to the pavement. He had no overcoat on, and his hands were thrust deep into his pockets: he was cold. There was a look of gay curiosity in his blue eyes.

He searched his pockets for the old silver-mounted pipe that he had had with him in the Alps with Suvorov, and in the Moscow campaign—but he had left his pipe at home. An official in a nankeen coat came out of the crowd and ran beside his horse. His bristly cheek was twitching.

"Your Excellency, they are clamouring for constitutional government—I have heard it myself. . . . It's a revolution. . . ."

"Nonsense!" Shrugging his shoulders with the cold, Miloradovitch thought: "It's a cursed bore not having my pipe with me," and added cheerfully: "A wretched mutiny, that's all it is. They have no leader. They are all leaders. Someone ought to talk sense into them. . . . I'll go myself."

His horse started suddenly, and Miloradovitch lost his hat.

Troops were coming up to St. Isaac's Cathedral from Vassilyevsky Ostrov: Lieutenant Baron Rozen was bringing up a detachment of the Finland Regiment. His men mixed with the crowd on the bridge, talking and laughing.

"Don't worry. We won't shoot at our own men. . . . We aren't sworn to do that. . . . We'll do no mischief, auntie. We won't hurt our own people."

The Emperor Nicolas and his troops were on the Admiralty Boulevard.

A thick line of soldiers showed dark in the snow at the edge of the Senate Square. They were skirmishers from the mutinous Moscow Regiment. The rattle of musket fire suddenly grew louder and more frequent.

The crowd, squeezed close to the railings outside St. Isaac's, seemed to have been waiting for the shots; the volley apparently gave them courage, and made them understand that the smoke-clad column of hatless young officers and soldiers in unbuttoned coats was a new, unknown force. With a cheerful noise the people in the crowd began pulling to pieces the stacks of logs by St. Isaac's Cathedral; a little boy threw a log at the Chief of Police, and his horse shied. The crowd laughed.

A frozen log struck the Emperor's horse too. It reared. Nicholas stood up in his stirrups and

shouted in a loud, ringing voice—he did not know he had such a voice:

"Stand back!"

The crowd drew back. With logs under their arms people ran across the square to the mutineers.

The Emperor turned to his troops and commanded:

"Get ready!" The soldiers raised their muskets.

Miloradovitch settled more comfortably in the saddle and rode towards the mutineers. Bullets whizzed past his ears.

Some of the skirmishers ran back to the main body, others lay in the snow watching a general on a tall horse ride towards them, hatless, without an overcoat, his red hair waving in the wind, and his sabre rattling against his stirrup.

The soldiers in the main body also looked at him, shaking the snow off their coats.

"It's Count Miloradovitch, mates!" an old soldier of the Moscow Regiment shouted joyfully, taking the icicles off his moustache. "Where is he off to, without his hat?"

The men laughed. Miloradovitch drew up his horse. He laughed too, brushing his hair off his face.

"Brothers, what the devil—there's no sense in this—what's the use of your standing here? Go back!"

The men drew back, and in doing so forced a tall

man in a black overcoat against the monument. A patch of snow fell from the stonework where the back of his head touched it.

He pushed the soldiers away and stepped forward. He was a retired officer of the Life Guards, Kahovskoy by name. He had a knitted scarf round his thin neck, and the back of his head was covered with snow. He fumbled awkwardly with both hands in the breast of his coat, and pulled out a pistol. A shot rang out; there was a sudden flash and a shout of "hurrah." Kahovskoy threw the smoking pistol into the snow.

Cheer after cheer drove Miloradovitch's horse past the ranks. The general swayed in the saddle, bobbing up and down in an absurd way. He sank on to his horse's neck, losing his stirrups. Dark spots of blood appeared in the snow. He let go the horse's neck and hung head downwards, his red hair sweeping across his face.

The laughter and the noise died down. A silence descended on the darkened square, the frosty day, the cold city . . . the empty stirrups jingled.

"They've killed him," someone cried dully in the Admiralty Boulevard. The people ran away. The pavement round the Senate Square was deserted, and one could see the slanting columns of snow sweep along the granite embankment.

Miloradovitch's horse was stopped at the Horse

Guards Riding School. The general was smiling and breathing heavily. They lifted him out of the saddle and laid him on the snow.

He lay on his side, thin legs doubled up in tight-fitting trousers. Red blood was oozing through his snow-covered uniform. They carried him to the office of the Horse Guards Regiment and put him on a bench. He did not open his eyes; breathing hard, he still smiled. He was dying.

Trumpets sounded in the Horse Guards courtyard; the last squadrons were being summoned to the Senate Square against the mutineers.

Someone ripped open Miloradovitch's coat with a sharp soldier's knife covered with crumbs of rye bread; a sticky blood-stain spread over his fine white shirt. Miloradovitch's hand hung down, his thin fingers opened slowly.

The trumpet-calls continued. The general stirred faintly, as though trying to find a more comfortable position. His thin face became thoughtful, his nose grew sharp. He smiled no longer. He was dead.

His watch and a signet ring that lay at his feet on the bench disappeared; someone had stolen them.

XVII

Colonel Koshelev (retired) of the Guards, who had come from Moscow to sell his Petersburg house,

was standing in the crowd by the Senate.

Miloradovitch's horse galloped past, and the crowd rushed into Galerny Street. Koshelev was left alone on the pavement. He had been standing there since the red disc of the sun first shone through the cold mist, and the bronze monument and the soldiers' shakos glittered dimly.

That morning a man in a grey overcoat had stopped next to him. Turning his handsome face to his neighbour he had said, with a cheerful laugh:

"Just look what the fools are trying to do! They've come out into the empty Square and think they can tackle us that way."

"Come on, Ryleyev," said his neighbour, a tall, lanky young man in spectacles, dressed in a brown coat, with an overcoat flung over his shoulders. Koshelev thought he was a German.

"I'll come all right," Ryleyev answered, and they crossed the Square arm in arm.

Koshelev had heard Ryleyev's name in his Moscow friends' houses. He had been invited in his club to join the mysterious League of Welfare, but had abruptly refused, thinking it was a Freemasons' Lodge.

Rolling their eyes like stage villains, his Moscow friends spoke in loud whispers of the Petersburg poet Ryleyev, and Colonel Pestel, of a *Green Book* that contained the draft of the Russian Constitution,

of the Southern Army. For the last six weeks people had been saying that there was bound to be a revolution.

"A revolution . . . so that's it," Koshelev thought, looking after Ryleyev.

The crowds of soldiers by Peter's monument grew thicker. He heard a continuous roar, a drawn-out "Hurrah," shouts of "Constantine, Constitution, Constantine," and flattened himself against the Senate wall as though afraid that somebody might drag him away from the sight of the troops.

The something terrible and inevitable of which he had had a glimpse in the fire of Moscow, the strange speeches of Count Stroganov, his dead friend and benefactor, the frenzied words of the old Martinist Naum Stepanitch in the hall of his Moscow house, while the flames hissed and flickered—all his vague uneasiness and bitterness, his fear and anguish, acquired a different meaning now that he stood on the frozen pavement by the Senate and watched the massed soldiers and listened to their cheers.

He suddenly felt so light-hearted that he smiled. So this was Count Stroganov's revolution! It had come. But there was nothing terrible in it—they were all his own people, officers, comrades-in-arms. He had only to cross the Square to join them.

If revolution meant chaos, the thing to do was to overcome chaos and to conquer.

"To conquer . . . to save Russia," Koshelev thought. "Shall I give way to fear again, as I did in the flames of Moscow, and fail my comrades? No, I am not afraid; I'll join them or there shall be no forgiveness for me. . . . I will go to save Russia."

It seemed to Koshelev as though that which everyone had been expecting of the Emperor Alexander after his splendid victories, that which alone would have justified the horrible assassination of Paul—a transfiguration of Russia—were at last taking place here, by the bronze statue of Peter.

"My God, Parasha . . . " Koshelev thought. "But I must go . . . the hour has come. . . . Forgive me, Parasha; I must."

Koshelev crossed himself and ran across the Square.

"What am I doing? Turn back! Parasha is with child. Never mind. . . . They are firing. . . . I must go. It's for Russia."

The soldiers made way for the heavily-breathing man in a black overcoat. They pushed him farther into the crowd. All were looking to the left, towards the Admiralty. Some of the men raised their muskets and fired. The blackened snow was trodden down. There was a smell of leather and damp overcoats.

The soldiers made a solid wall round the monument, at the base of which a group of officers and

civilians had collected. All were talking together and waving their arms. They seemed to be arguing.

"This way, sir," said a civilian gentleman in a cloth coat with a hareskin collar. He skipped up to Koshelev and gave him his hand.

"I am Pushtchin, Ivan Ivanovitch, collegiate assessor . . . whom have I the honour to address?"

"Koshelev, retired Colonel of the Grenadiers."

"What is it you want?"

"I?" said Koshelev, with a cold smile. "The same thing as you."

"The cavalry!" someone shouted.

Koshelev was forgotten. He could see Pushtchin's modest face, he recognized Ryleyev by his bright eyes and curly hair, and the young German, who had taken off his spectacles and looked at the street, screwing up his eyes and stretching his scraggy neck.

"Let me pass, Küchelbecker," Ryleyev said, moving him aside. "Yes, it is the cavalry. Gentlemen, there's going to be a battle."

He laughed and threw down his overcoat. In a closely-fitting black coat and a white scarf round his neck, Ryleyev seemed younger and thinner. He laughed, showing his dazzling teeth, and, touching the arm of a soldier who stood before him, said gaily:

"Give me a bandolier too, uncle."

The elderly soldier turned to the gentleman and,

without speaking, began unfastening his white straps.

All were talking at the same time. Koshelev heard bits of conversation:

"The land will be shared out equally, and the soldiers will have only fifteen years' service . . . "

"Speransky has given his consent, and Admiral Mordvinov also; there will be a provisional government."

"Like the Cortes of Spain."

"Gentlemen, here's the cavalry. . . ."

"Spain, indeed! . . . A provisional government and a Duma elected for five years."

"Cavalry. . . . The Horse Guards!"

"They'll never dare to shoot—nonsense. . . ."

Koshelev was looking about as though searching for someone. His face grew cold and contemptuous. So this was the revolution! Why were they arguing, when they ought to be giving orders? Else the soldiers would grow tired of standing in the frost and turn their bayonets against the disputants. They were mere talkers, who understood nothing. The contemptuous "they" included in Koshelev's mind Ryleyev, the lanky German, Pushtchin in his hareskin coat, and all the rest.

The soldiers were standing at ease, with their backs to the arguing gentlemen. The drummer of the Moscow Regiment, a dry old man with a single to-

bacco-stained tooth in his mouth, impatiently shifted his drum and shouted excitedly:

"They've brought horses enough. . . . Form up, you Cains! Fighting against your own brothers, you perjurers! . . . We are sworn to Constantine, not to Nicolas. . . . Nicolas has no business to keep him in prison. He wants to rule instead of his brother—but no fear! He's brought plenty of Judases with him. . . . We have only one soul each, not two. We don't swear allegiance to two men in one week . . . "

"The Emperor Constantine was arrested at Narva," his neighbour was saying. "He's been put in fetters. . . . But it's against the law to put a Tsar in fetters."

A black-haired grenadier, grey at the temples, suddenly seized Koshelev by the sleeve:

"Your honour!"

The man's handsome, swarthy face seemed familiar to Koshelev.

"Why, your honour, you were in our battalion!"

Letting go Koshelev's sleeve, he turned round to the soldiers and said:

"He was our captain, lads. . . . We were in Paris together." He took hold of Koshelev again:

"I am Mihailo Perekrestov, of the third company. What a dreadful thing, your honour! It's nothing

to those generals to swear allegiance every day afresh, but it isn't a joke to us. We are sworn to the Emperor Constantine. . . . What is the cavalry doing there, your honour, seeking our blood?"

"God is with us," Koshelev answered, with a smile. "If you are for Constantine, you must stand up for him, grenadier. . . . God is with us."

Young officers used to come to Mihailo Perekrestov's little room in the regimental yard by the bakeries, where the married soldiers and the band had their quarters.

His wife, Suzanne, who had grown old early, would be sitting on the bed, her hair showing from under her kerchief. She smoked a long pipe like an Indian woman. The young gentlemen were interested in Perekrestov's French wife. Mihailo did not object to it: they treated her like a lady, and Lieutenant Panov used to kiss her thin brown hand.

Mihailo stood beside her, breathless with the stuffiness of the room and the tobacco smoke, listening to what their visitors were saying. Yesterday, as on many former days, he had felt restless and vaguely uneasy. Nicolas had betrayed his brother Constantine. They must stand by Constantine—all must come out and fight for him—then there would be freedom in Russia, no more serfdom, justice for all, and a good reward for zealous Russian soldiers.

"This is your revolution," Suzanne was saying in her broken Russian. "We have had ours. Now it is your turn. We gave them a good beating."

She banged her small brown fist on her knee.

"Give them a good beating now for Constantine. There are serfs in Russia. My Misha has become a slave here and I a peasant. It isn't right."

"Come, that will do," Mihailo tried to stop her, shuffling his feet.

But Suzanne waved him off and said proudly to the young officers:

"It isn't right. . . . It's a shame to have serfs. . . . Your Constantine must see to it that there aren't any serfs in Russia."

Before daybreak the young officers had called out the Grenadier Battalion to fight for Tsar Constantine. Mihailo made ready to go. His wife gave him a clean shirt that slightly smelt of aniseed—it was her smell—and herself combed his greying hair with a damp comb.

A drum was beating in the regimental yard in the cold morning twilight. Suzanne threw a shawl over her shoulders and went out on to the steps to see her husband off. She straightened the white leather strap on his back and said quietly:

"Everything is right now. . . . Go, Misha."

"I am going," he answered, crossing himself.

Then Suzanne threw her arms round his neck

from behind and, pressing her face to his high collar, clung to him breathlessly.

"Come, come." Mihailo tenderly took his wife's dark-skinned hands off his shoulders. "People are looking. . . . Go indoors, you will be cold. . . . Don't you worry. We are in the right. God will not allow anything to happen. . . ."

"Here's the cavalry!" someone shouted, and Perekrestov came to himself.

"Form square!" many voices cried around him.

Koshelev buttoned up his coat, thrust his hands into his pockets, and with a cold gleam in his eye gave the word of command.

XVIII

The charge of the Horse Guards against the mutineers had been ordered by the Emperor Nicolas. He was watching the movement of the cavalry with an expression as harsh as Koshelev's.

A sharp wind blew into the mutineers' faces; they could hear the clank of swords and the snorting of horses.

Koshelev gave the word to fire. The whole mass of soldiers shook with the volley. Flashes of lightning played round the Bronze Horseman. All was dark with powder smoke.

The Square was slippery with ice. The horses

slipped; the riders fell out of their saddles. The mutineers' volleys drove the cavalry back. A few horses were left lying in the snow. A wounded guardsman groaned loudly.

The trumpets sounded the charge again. Droves of horsemen again rushed across the Square. Lightning flashed round the bronze Peter.

When the smoke had blown away, Koshelev saw riderless horses galloping away, cavalrymen running back on foot, men taking the saddles off the fallen horses, and understood that the second charge had also been repulsed.

A cheerful hum rose over the rebels' column. The soldiers were blowing their noses and hastily straightening their straps. All felt warm and jolly.

"Now we want guns," Koshelev thought cheerfully. "A few salvos of grape, and we'll finish them off and win the day."

"Where are the guns, lads?" Koshelev walked rapidly through the ranks. It was growing dark, and he could not recognise anyone in the dark.

"Where's Ryleyev?" he cried.

"I am Ryleyev," said a husky voice.

Ryleyev's eyes were bright, and warm steam was coming from him. He was leaning on a soldier's musket.

"Give me guns," Koshelev said. "We'll finish them off with grape-shot."

"Guns, guns," people said around him. Koshelev sharply raised his voice.

"What's the use of standing here? We must clear them out of the Square with shot and attack the Winter Palace and the Petropavlovsky Fortress. Clear them away from the bridge and the boulevard . . . "

"I'm coming with you."

A fine face, with a halo of fair hair, approached Koshelev in the dark; it seemed to him that a woman was looking into his eyes.

"Poltoratsky, of the Izyum Hussars," said the man, trying to find Koshelev's hand.

Something seemed to snap in Koshelev's breast like a stone falling into a deep well.

"Poltoratsky! Fancy meeting you here! . . . Do you remember Paris? I am Koshelev."

"Of course I remember, Pyotr." They kissed each other three times as on Easter Day.

Poltoratsky quoted suddenly, with an uneasy laugh:

> "Russia shall rise at last from slumber,
> And on the ruins of tyranny
> Write our names."

"Absurd how things keep coming into one's head. . . ."

"What are you talking about?" Koshelev cried, and thought, "That's my fate."

All at once he felt indifferent to everything, as though he had suddenly grown tired. "I say, where are the guns?"

"We haven't got any." Poltoratsky laughed uneasily and repeated: "'And on the ruins of tyranny' . . . Damn it!"

An anxious hum of voices came from the right. "What is it now?" Koshelev thought, with weary irritation.

A sledge was making its way between the dead horses in the Square. A monk stood in the sledge, holding on to the driver's shoulder with one hand and clasping a crucifix in the other. It was the Metropolitan Serafim.

Many of the soldiers took off their shakos and ran out towards him, crossing themselves.

"We don't want a priest," Poltoratsky cried, laughing. "We shall have plenty of time to kiss the cross."

"We don't want a priest. . . . Go back. . . . Turn back, driver. Go away, Father," other voices shouted. Someone gave orders to beat the drums. The old drummer of the Moscow Regiment beat a tattoo. The driver struck his horse with the reins; it dashed off at a gallop, and the monk sat down suddenly with the jolt. The soldiers laughed.

In the Admiralty Boulevard the sledge with the monk dashed past some gun-carriages; General Suhozanet was bringing four guns from the Guards Artillery to the Emperor at full speed. The sledge drove to the Winter Palace.

The deserted Palace was full of resounding echoes. Groups of ladies-in-waiting ran noiselessly across the dark halls as though somebody were chasing them.

Metropolitan Serafim sank heavily into an armchair. Arakcheyev was standing by the frozen window, with his forehead pressed to the glass. His uniform was undone; he had not a single decoration, and only a miniature of Alexander, covered with diamonds, glittered dully in his top buttonhole.

Arakcheyev and Serafim did not see each other. The hall was shaking with the roar of the mutiny. The crystal chandeliers and the glass of the clock on the mantelpiece jingled softly. The white flock of ladies-in-waiting ran back, still as though somebody were chasing them.

Suhozanet's guns wheeled into position opposite the Senate. He galloped up to the mutineers.

"Surrender!" he cried, breathless with the wind. His horse pranced under him. "We'll spare you if you surrender."

"Go back! Ah, you son of a bitch, we'll shoot you! . . . What about the constitution?"

"Surrender—you will be spared!"

"Shoot the general! . . . Fire!"

A volley rang out. Suhozanet dashed past the battery and jumped into a snowdrift.

A tall horseman, the Emperor Nicolas, turned to the guns.

"Fire in succession, from the right!"

The men's shadows moved. A lieutenant, noticing that the gunner with the match hesitated, leapt off his horse and ran up to him.

The match crackled, raining sparks. The dark Square was still.

"Fire!"

The tall horseman waved his hand.

The first gun sprang back with a jerk. The shot flew high above the rebels' heads and crashed into the Senate wall. The window-panes cracked. The statues in the porch—Law, Justice, Wisdom, and Truth—shook, blinking their blind eyes.

There seemed to be a belt of running fire round the bronze Peter.

The second gun fired into the midst of the mutineers. A crowd of stampeding soldiers knocked Koshelev off his feet and swept him along. He shouted wildly:

"Stand fast! Fire!"

A third gun fired. Deaf with the noise, he thought, as the crowd swept him along:

"All is lost. . . . They are running away. Parasha . . . Russia."

Still the guns thundered.

The dark crowds swept off the Square, ran along the quay, jumped into the Senate cellars, thronged on the ice of the Neva.

The Square was empty. Men rose from the heaps of bodies and fell down again. The small solitary figure of an officer stood by the Bronze Horseman. His fair hair waved in the wind, he was shouting something, and menacingly pointing at the guns. Close to him a soldier was holding his stomach with both hands, spitting blood and swearing.

The wounded were dragged by the arms on to the Neva. The mutineers had gathered by a big opening in the ice. In the Senate Square the tall horseman stood up in his stirrups. The guns were switched round towards the Neva. Mihailo Perekrestov put his head on Koshelev's shoulder. The shot rained on to the river and swept them both away.

A new and sinister Empire was born amidst the shrieking of shells in the Senate Square in the dusk of that December day.

An hour later lights appeard in the Winter Palace windows, and a thanksgiving service began. The Emperor Nicolas came into the big hall. He blinked with the light; there was snow on his eyelashes. He

straightened the crumpled blue ribbon on his uniform and crossed himself several times in succession.

The troops were on duty all night at the Palace and in the Square. The fuses smouldered by the guns. Huge bonfires crackled.

In the morning, when the last carts with corpses had left the Senate Square, one could see that the snow between Peter's monument and the Senate was covered with frozen pools of blood, and the plaster on the Senate walls was honeycombed with shot.

Someone's fine fair hair, stuck to a lamp-post, waved in the morning wind.

XIX

On a wet winter day a man, looking like a bony gypsy in his shabby black zouave jacket, was furiously riding his bay horse down a country road in the province of Tambov. His swarthy face was splashed with mud and snow. It was hard to recognise in him Pavel Yengolytchev of the Izyum Hussars, the hero of fifteen glorious charges.

That day a letter had been brought to his house from Petersburg, and after reading it he rushed off to the fields, hardly troubling to fasten the saddle-girths. The letter contained news of the December mutiny, and said that Misha Poltoratsky had had his head blown off by a shell in the Senate Square.

In the evening his wet horse eagerly licked the snow in the courtyard: Yengolytchev returned in the dark. A sleepy servant came out of a dilapidated lodge. His hempen shirt flapped in the wind, and his straw-filled clogs scraped on the snow. He led the horse past the wooden pillars of the house to the stables by the pond, where a broken barrel was frozen fast to a snowdrift.

Yengolytchev's estate had been neglected since his wife's death. She had left him two children. The pale, black-haired little boys, in worn velvet jackets, lived on the top floor of the house, where a stove burned night and day. The old housekeeper, Kilikia, looked after them. Some distant relatives from Tambov had already been to inquire after them: the children were soon to be taken to a State boarding-school.

On the ground floor, where the widower lived, the wall-papers were tattered, a heap of hay in the corner was covered with an overcoat, whips and pipes lay about the battered arm-chairs, and there was grey tobacco-ash on the tables. Centaur's room was wretched and dismal.

He had held a splendid memorial dinner there after his wife's funeral, and, getting drunk, shot at the portraits and mirrors, driving his guests away, and then sang wildly and rushed about the room carrying his two children in his arms, choking with

sobs. He prayed there, too, before the heavy ikon at which he and Ginette had been blessed at their wedding.

At daybreak, old Kilikia, bent double with age, wrapped up in furs and shawls, knocked with her stick at her master's door.

"It's daylight, my dear, and you are still awake. . . . Go to bed, my falcon; rest yourself."

A crumpled letter lay among the tobacco-ashes on Yengolytchev's table.

He paced up and down his study, and Kilikia, upstairs, had heard his rapid steps. She had come down, and making her way through a narrow passage lumbered with boxes, listened at her master's door: the children were asleep, but their father could not rest.

He was walking about the room. There was a jingle of glass: he must have opened the sideboard. Yes, she could hear him drinking. He muttered something, then spoke aloud. He seemed to laugh. Then he sang in a shaking voice:

"That steed swifter than the desert wind."

He coughed and was silent. The old woman whispered behind the door:

"My poor falcon, Pashenka."

There was a portrait in the widower's room, hanging over the table and its litter of sample bags of oats

and rye, bills, and blue volumes of the *Son of the Fatherland*. The portrait was invisible in the dark, but there was a brass plate under the dull frame. In the year of his wife's death Centaur had had an elaborate inscription engraved upon it:

"This portrait of my wife, and the mother of my dear children, Eugenie Josifovna Yengolytchev, was well painted from nature, May 16th, 1819. My dear wife, who was French born, and had the honoured military name of Dorfey, was carried off by me in the saddle straight from the French capital. She passed away on September 29th, 1822. Sleep in peace, fleeting dove."

"My dove has flown away," Centaur whispered. "Misha is killed. . . . All are gone. . . . And we had dreamt life would be so wonderful, so splendid. . . . What victories! The taking of Paris! . . . It's all gone."

The old woman came into the room quietly. Centaur was kneeling in front of an arm-chair, resting his dishevelled head upon it. A candle was burning on the floor.

"Don't, don't, my dear," said Kilikia, bending over him.

"Nurse darling, all is gone. . . . No joy left, no friends. . . . My poor children are done for . . . and Russia too . . . "

Centaur buried his face in the sleeve of his shabby black zouave jacket.

XX

On a night in March, when the sky over Petersburg was clear and empty, the black catafalque, with the body of the Emperor Alexander, was brought from Taganrog to be buried in the Petropavlovsky Fortress.

The thunder of the funeral salutes scattered a heap of logs in the fortress courtyard and broke the white-washed glass of the prisoners' windows.

Long before the guns saluted the dead Emperor, a pale lady in black set out on her wanderings through the Petersburg hospitals, chapels, and mortuaries. She had begun those wanderings early in January.

In the Obuhovsky Hospital, on the steps to the mortuary, the lady met a dark-skinned woman in a shabby overcoat, with a knitted shawl on her head. Each made way for the other to pass. The woman in the shawl leaned against the cold wall and the lady in black walked by; so it was that a grenadier's widow, Suzanne Perekrestov, met Paraskeva Savvishna Koshelev, who had come from Moscow. Both were looking for their husbands. Bending down over the corpses covered with hempen hospital sheets, they looked attentively at each other, but did not speak.

They did not find their husbands.

Many people in those days went about the hospitals. Among them was a soldier with three chevrons on his sleeve—a bald-headed, morose old man with bristly whiskers—Corporal Akim Govoruhin.

Having served his time, Govoruhin had been superannuated from the Guards and was employed in the Petropavlovsky Fortress as a sergeant in the garrison.

When the lady in black came out of the Smolensky Chapel, the old corporal overtook her in the street.

"Be careful not to slip here, madam," he said. "See, there's ice on the steps."

The lady did not hear him. She was looking straight in front of her.

"Who are you looking for? I have met you many a time. . . . Tell me who you are looking for, and perhaps I can help you. I am employed in the fortress and know all the prisoners."

"Yes," the lady moved her pale lips. "I am looking for someone—Colonel Koshelev, Pyotr Grigoryevitch."

"Koshelev, Koshelev. . . . Perhaps you mean Kahovskoy?"

"No—Koshelev."

"We have a Kahovskoy, but no Koshelev. There is Pavel Ivanitch Pestel, Sergey Ivanitch Muravyov-Apostol, Kondraty Fyodoritch Ryleyev, Beztuzhev, Basargin. . . . But there is no Koshelev. Let me

see now—which Koshelev is it? Was he in the grenadiers?"

"Yes, he was."

"So you are his wife? . . . Poor lady! . . . Listen to me. There is no Koshelev in the fortress, but I should be glad to be of service to you, lady. But I don't know where to look for him. I too am searching; many of our grenadiers were killed in the Square with the gentry. I am looking for my regimental godson, the loyal soldier Mihailo Perekrestov. There is no trace of him."

The lady was looking in front of her.

"I'll tell you, madam, our grenadiers hadn't broken their oath. They went into the Square because they were loyal. It isn't through them that Russia is in trouble. They didn't strangle their Tsar in the Castle. . . . We know who is at the bottom of it all. . . . They wanted to bring law and justice to Russia. That's what the gentlemen in the fortress, too, are telling me. I see them often. Their windows are whitewashed and nailed up, but I see them when I bring them tea or a roll. There's no harm in them. They are good gentlemen. They have all been dressed in hospital gowns, and Mr. Bestuzhev has been put in irons. The other day five deal coffins were brought to the fortress and put in the powder cells. There will be no mercy for anyone. None will be spared."

Blinking his white eyelashes, the old soldier went on, talking to himself:

"We had hoped for something very different in the Emperor Alexander's reign. . . . And I expected grace and happiness for Russia when I received a letter from our wanderer, Rodion Stepanitch, written in his own hand. . . . He finished his pilgrimage, but who can I tell about it now? There's no one. The grenadiers were killed in the Square. I haven't a friend left. . . . But it is in Rodion Stepanitch's own handwriting, and I carry it here in my breast. But who can I show it to? He wrote in it the truth about the Emperor Paul's death. He had told that truth to Paul's son, and the son repented of his sin. The servant of God, Rodion, was laid in the coffin instead of the Tsar, and Alexander has gone to do penance as a pilgrim and wanderer for the rest of his life."

"What are you saying?"

It was as though the lady in black had only now grasped what the soldier was telling her. She stopped and tightly clasped her hands.

"Where is my husband? Is he in the fortress?"

"No, madam, he is not there. I have told you. He was killed in the Square."

"Killed . . . "

She turned white and drew herself up. The suppressed despair, the racking anguish she had gone

through, strained every nerve in her heavy body. She walked on with a firm and even step, clasping her hands to her breast as though to stifle a cry.

Snow was fluttering in the evening air. The doors of St. Andrew's Church were still open, though vespers were over. A beggar with a wooden leg was counting up his coppers by the door.

The church was dark and empty. The lady stopped at the entrance, looking like a huge shadow in the dark. A solitary voice on the right of the altar was hurrying through a requiem or an intercession service. It sounded like a sonorous echo in a deep well.

The lady raised her arms like a pair of black wings. The wings fell, and she staggered. She walked to a dark ikon in the corner. Two candles were still burning before it, but one was almost out.

The old soldier also came into the church, and stopped by the candle-box, fingering his cap. The voice by the altar stopped. The verger was putting out the sanctuary lamps before the ikons with a long pole that had a smoked hood at the end of it.

The lady swayed on her knees. Her eyes were closed. As though overpowered by sleep, she unclasped her hands, and they slipped down helplessly from her breast.

Suddenly her eyelashes trembled, and she opened her transparent eyes. Awkwardly she leaned her

hands on the floor. The child stirred under her heart.

"Thy will, Thy will be done." Her lips trembled, and she rose heavily from her knees. She had awakened.

The desperate, shuddering cry she had brought to the dark ikon died down unuttered, and now she carried within her the perfect stillness of peace.

She walked past the soldier. Her transparent eyes were shining. Fingering his cap, the old man wanted to say something to her, but only his grey eyebrows moved. By the time he came out of the church the lady had already crossed the road, which lay grey under its thin covering of snow.

Snowflakes fluttered down over the walls in the twilight. She walked on, like some dark bird flying softly into the gathering night.

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